...see ...page 54!

WORLD'S LEADING MYSTERY MAGAZINE

ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE

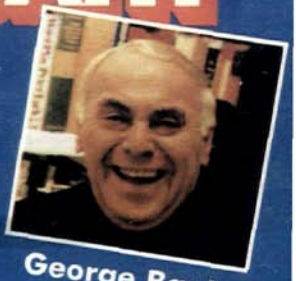
MARCH 1990
$2.25 U.S.
$2.75 CAN.

Isaac Asimov

Julian Symons

49th ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

Edward D. Hoch



George Baxt

Antonia Fraser

03
36006
0 387166 9

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Join the Crossword Puzzles of the Month Club and put your crossword skills to the test!

Become a member and receive five intriguing, fun and challenging new puzzles — mailed right to your home every month! These are not reprints, but *original, full-size* puzzles edited especially for our members by the noted crossword puzzle expert Henry Hook. Month after month, you'll receive five brand-new puzzles and their solutions . . . five fiendishly clever puzzles with the same degree of difficulty as those in the Sunday New York Times!

Join today! A perfect gift!

An entire year's membership is just $29.95. (We pay the postage.) Send your check or money order to:

Crossword Puzzles of the Month Club
629 Green Bay Road, Dept. 188
Wilmette, Illinois 60091

Or call toll-free: 1-800-433-4386
and charge it to your MasterCard or Visa.

Your satisfaction is guaranteed.

©1989, CPMC

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A Special Invitation!

Explore the vast, uncharted reaches of the human imagination!

We are in the midst of a great resurgence of interest in the short story. People who used to read novels are now reading short stories because they fit the pace of our busy lives. You can read a short story in one sitting.

People who used to watch a lot of TV are reading short stories now. They'd rather not have their food for thought put through a strainer.

And because more people are reading short stories, a lot of very good authors are writing them again.

MODERN SHORT STORIES will introduce you to a parade of fascinating people and involve you in their lives, their failures and triumphs. Move you to laughter and tears. Excite your sense of wonder. Engage your sense of outrage.

And teach you more about the mysterious workings of the human mind and heart than you could pick up in a season full of sit-coms.

All this in 10 minutes or less, the time it takes to read a short story! So act now to begin your subscription to MODERN SHORT STORIES.

MODERN SHORT STORIES, . . . a brand-new magazine whose time has come!

For fastest service call toll-free: 1-800-435-0715 In Illinois call 1-892-0753

(7:30AM-8:30PM) EASTERN STANDARD TIME

MODERN SHORT STORIES.

YES! Please send me 6 issues (one year) of **Modern Short Stories** for only **$7.95** - I save 41% off the newsstand price!

☐ Payment Enclosed ☐ Bill me later
Please charge my: ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard

Acct. # |_|_|_|_|_|_|_|_|_|_|_|_|_|_|_|_|

Signature Exp. Date

(Add $3.00/year in Canada and $4.50/year in other foreign countries)

SUBSCRIPTION ORDER FORM

PLEASE PRINT BELOW:

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY STATE ZIP

Allow 6 to 8 weeks for delivery of first issue U.S. Funds only. AEQ30

MODERN SHORT STORIES. P.O. BOX 473 MT. MORRIS, IL 61054-8026

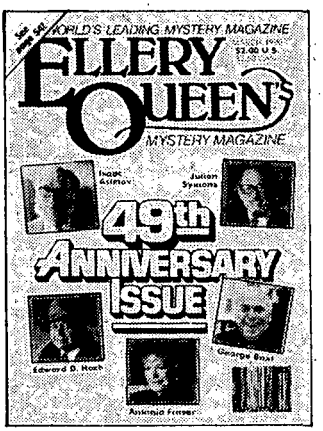
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Contents

THE WORLD'S LEADING MYSTERY MAGAZINE

ELLERY QUEEN®

The Spy Who Went to Camelot	Edward D. Hoch	**4**
Drink to Me Only	George Baxt	**22**
The Notorious Miss L.	Jacqueline Babbin	**32**
The Jumbo Ivories	Donald Olson	**42**
Mrs. Arnold	Berton Roueché	**54**
A Hell of a Couple of Days	Ernest Savage	**58**
The Jury Box	Jon L. Breen	**78**
Lost in a Space Warp	Isaac Asimov	**81**
Supper on the Table	Carol Cail	**94**
Doctor Zeit	Antonia Fraser	**102**
An Exceptional Night	Robert Barnard	**112**
Shorty	William Bankier	**121**
The Conjuring Trick	Julian Symons	**133**



Davis Publications, Inc., 380 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10017
Note: indicia on page 159

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Beautiful Buy!

Thousands Sold at $48.00

NOW ONLY $19.95

NOW AVAILABLE IN EXTRA LARGE SIZES

New Leaf Sweater

SOFT LUXURIOUS COTTON... DAZZLING BY DAY OR NIGHT

Sweet Sensation

• Leaf Appliqué Shoulders • *Hand-Crocheted* Sleeves • Shimmering 'Pearl' Beading

Fresh and lovely as the rustling new leaves of Spring...or the rich, multi-colorful leaves of Autumn. A wonderful fashion find to wear day or night, all year 'round. Very versatile, and easy to care for—It's soft, sumptuous pure Ramie cotton. (Save $$—Was a bestseller at $48.00.) A superb value from Premiere Editions at only **$19.95**

Leafy appliqués, in hues of Wheat, Oatmeal, Blue and Pink, give it today's 'big shoulder' look. The lacy sleeves are hand crocheted... Handfuls of faux pearls cascade down in front. A premium-quality import in White/Multi Ramie cotton. **Sizes:** S(4-6), M(8-10), L(12-14), XL(16-18), 2X(20-22), 3X(24-26).

Money-Back Guarantee Loveliest sweater of the year...or return in 30 days for full refund of purchase price (except ship. & hdlg.). Our policy is to process all orders promptly. We charge your credit card only when order is shipped. Shipment guaranteed within 60 days.

PREMIERE EDITIONS®, Hanover, PA 17333

SATISFACTION GUARANTEED — MAIL TODAY!

PREMIERE EDITIONS® Dept. LPM-8452, Hanover, PA 17333-0013

YES! Kindly rush _____ **New Leaf Sweater(s)** (M204289A) in

SIZE(s): _____ / _____ / _____

☐ One for $19.95 plus $2.95 postage & handling.

☐ TWO for just $38.00 plus $3.75 post. & hdlg.

Enclosed is _____ (NV res. add sales tax)

CHARGE TO MY: ☐ VISA ☐ Discover Card ☐ MasterCard ☐ American Express

Acct. No. _____ Exp. Date _____

Print Name _____

Address _____

_____

City _____

State/Zip _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED
© H H I Inc. 1989

a *NEW* Rand story by

EDWARD D. HOCH

Rand found the conference room unlocked. The long table, which could accommodate up to a dozen, was empty. He took a seat halfway down one side and waited. Within ten minutes, Parkinson strode briskly into the room. At first glance, Rand wondered how he could have still thought of him as "young Parkinson." Had the years slipped by that fast . . . . ?

THE SPY WHO WENT TO CAMELOT

by EDWARD D. HOCH

"I wonder if you remember me," Susan Waterhouse said to Rand when they met by prearrangement at the dining room of London's Savoy Hotel. It was the height of the summer tourist season and the room was crowded, even for lunch on a Monday noon.

He looked into her aging face with its halo of white hair, and something about her sparkling eyes brought back a memory. "Your letter said we met after the war— Of course! Radio school at Oxford!"

"I'm not too surprised you remembered," she told him with a laugh after they had given the waiter their order. "There were only fourteen in the class and I sat right in front of you."

"I was terribly young, still an undergraduate."

"And I was one of those older Americans who made your life miserable. Evelyn and I were in the Women's Army Corps, taking a special course in decoding and deciphering messages. We roomed together at Banton Castle, about fifteen miles outside Oxford. Her name was Evelyn Majors."

"I don't remember her. I barely remember you."

© 1990 by Edward D. Hoch.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"In my letter two weeks ago, I indicated I was trying to locate her." She slipped a black-and-white snapshot from her purse. "Here's a picture of us together in our WAC uniforms."

"Yes," he agreed, "now I remember you both." They were standing together in the picture, the same height, looking almost like sisters except that Susan Waterhouse had longer hair. Their arms were around each other and it was obvious they were close friends. "Why are you trying to locate her after all these years?"

"We were so close then," she said as the waiter brought their drinks. "There were other WACs staying at the Castle, but Evelyn and I were the only ones studying top-secret decoding techniques. We couldn't really discuss it except between ourselves."

He nodded. "I was in my last year at Oxford, and I'd already decided to enter intelligence work. That's why I was taking the course."

"You managed to avoid military service?" she asked.

"I briefly attended St. Thomas Medical School in Lambeth," he confessed, "mainly to avoid the military. I suppose it was my guilty conscience that finally led me to a government career."

"I remembered your name from our classes, and years later I read that you were director of the Department of Concealed Communications."

The waiter interrupted with the tossed green salad she'd ordered. She was fashionably dressed, obviously not poor, and Rand was pleased he'd suggested the Savoy when he answered her letter. "I held that post for thirteen years," he told her, "but I've been retired since the mid-Seventies. My wife and I live in Reading, where she lectures at the University. Her field is Egyptian archaeology."

"How interesting! I married an Atlanta banker named Simpson. He died last March. Maybe that's one of the reasons I decided to come back to England and search through my past."

"I wish I could help you."

"There must be records somewhere."

"More likely in Washington than over here," Rand pointed out.

"But this is where it happened. This is where I had to begin."

"Where what happened?" he asked, feeling that he was missing some important point.

"Well, the war, our training—"

"Did Evelyn have any male friends?"

"A boy friend—but he never heard anything from her, either."

"Perhaps she just went home."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

She shook her head. "I know she would have written me. The British were training us and I feel she'd have been assigned over here."

"I'll see what I can do," Rand said as his oysters arrived. "What hotel are you staying at?"

"The Churchill. I'll be there till Saturday."

"I'll probably call on you there tonight or tomorrow. If I can learn anything at all about your friend, it will be while I'm in London this afternoon."

He was thinking of his old friend and superior, Hastings, whom he hadn't seen in months. Hastings owed him a favor or two.

Rand had probably visited Hastings' secluded office overlooking the Thames thirty or forty times in the thirteen years since his early retirement from Double-C. The security guards at the building's entrance had come to greet him as an old friend, barely glancing at the photograph on his plastic identification card. So it was a surprise when the guard stopped him and made no effort to release the electric gate barring his way.

"You know me," Rand told him. "I'm here to see Hastings."

"Mr. Hastings is no longer with us."

"What?"

"That's it, sir. I don't know any details."

"But—but he wouldn't have retired without letting me know!" Rand tried to remember when he'd been here last. It was shortly after his return from Australia and Hong Kong just two months ago. What had changed in two months' time?

The guard remained adamant and Rand tried to come up with another name. So many of the people he knew were gone now, deceased or retired. Then he remembered young Parkinson, who'd replaced him when he retired as director of Concealed Communications. He hadn't seen Parkinson in years, but knew he was still around.

"Parkinson," he said. "Is he free to see me?"

"Just a moment, sir." The guard walked a few steps from his desk to use a phone that was out of Rand's earshot. Presently he hung up the phone and returned. "Mr. Parkinson can see you in the third-floor conference room in ten minutes. Do you know the way?"

"Yes," Rand answered coldly. They were barring him from the secure area, sending him instead to a meeting room where they regularly met with vendors and routine visitors. He was directed to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

an elevator that went no higher than the third floor, and rode it with mounting distress. Something had happened to change Hastings' status, and his as well. But what?

He found the conference room unlocked. The long table, which could accommodate up to a dozen, was empty. He took a seat halfway down one side and waited. Within ten minutes, Parkinson strode briskly into the room. At first glance, Rand wondered how he could have still thought of him as "young Parkinson." Had the years slipped by that fast?

The man who walked around the table to take a seat facing him was well into his late forties, with tufts of grey hair already at his temples. "Hello, Rand," he said flatly, not offering to shake hands. "What can I do for you?"

"I was inquiring about Hastings—"

"Hastings had to retire for reasons of health."

"He would have told me. We were very close."

"It's something he didn't want to talk about." Parkinson tried a sly smile. "Something a bit embarrassing."

God, Rand wondered, is this the fellow I brought into Double-C and taught virtually everything I knew? Did I teach him this? "Look here, Parkinson," he said quietly, his mood fluctuating between exasperation and anger, "this is Rand you're talking to, remember? I don't want any of your threadbare cover-stories. I want the truth."

"I'm afraid you'll have to be satisfied with what I've given you," Parkinson replied quietly, his expression unchanged. Then, relaxing somewhat, he added, "What did you want to see him about? Perhaps I can help."

"I doubt it. I was after some information concerning something before your time."

"We're computerized now, you know. Nothing was before my time."

His challenge was more than Rand could resist. "All right. It concerns a radio school at Oxford from late nineteen forty-three to sometime in nineteen forty-eight or later. American WACs and others were taught the basics of decoding and deciphering messages transmitted by short-wave radio. A woman in the class there remembered me and has asked my help in locating an old friend."

"You were in the class, too?"

Rand nodded. "I was in my final year at Oxford and had decided to enter government service."

"We recruited you at the University?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Why not? The Communists were doing it regularly, as you know."

Parkinson merely grunted at that. "Give me the names and I'll run a check on them," he said.

Rand was left alone in the conference room while Parkinson went off on his mission. He sat staring at the walls and then lifted his gaze to the ceiling, wondering if the old listening devices were still functioning. It was a foolish thing to wonder. Something like that wouldn't change, even after thirteen years.

Presently Parkinson reappeared, carrying a computer printout he carefully kept from Rand's view. "All right, here we are. There were indeed two American WACs in that Oxford class of nineteen forty-eight. Their names were Evelyn Majors and Susan Waterhouse. The records show Waterhouse went to the communications section of the American embassy in London. She was there three years before being returned home to the States for discharge."

"I'm more interested in the other one. What about her?"

"Evelyn Majors died in 1948, shortly after completing her training at Oxford. It was an unfortunate accident on the Dover-to-Calais ferry. She lost her footing and was crushed between the boat and the dock."

"Where was she to have been stationed?"

"A routine assignment to an airfield in Scotland. She was planning to spend a week in Paris first, but that's when she died."

"Alone?"

"As far as we can tell. There was a boy friend, but he wasn't along."

"Never anything suspicious about the death?"

"Nothing on the computer."

"At least it explains why Susan Waterhouse never heard from her again."

"People come and go," Parkinson agreed, neatly folding the computer printout in half.

"Like Hastings."

"The man's retired, Rand. Reasons of health. Let it go at that."

"Very well."

"I'll walk you to the elevator."

Rand was about to tell him he knew the way, but thought better of it. He tried instead to remember Parkinson when he'd first arrived at the Department as a young man, bright and idealistic. At the elevator, Rand turned and shook his hand, giving him a sad smile. "Good luck. I won't be coming by again."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The elevator arrived and it was empty. As Rand stepped into it, Parkinson blocked the door with his foot to keep it from closing. For just an instant his features seemed to soften into the youthful face Rand remembered. He spoke one word in a low voice.

"Camelot."

Then the door closed and Rand felt himself descending to the ground floor.

He'd promised to stop by the Churchill Hotel with the result of his inquiries, and he arrived just at teatime. After he phoned up to her on a house phone, Susan Waterhouse came down to the lobby and they sat in a sunken lounge area where a waiter with a French accent took their orders for tea and sandwiches.

"I'm afraid I have some sad news," Rand began, even though this woman's problem now seemed slight to him compared to the Hastings affair.

"She's dead, isn't she?"

"I'm afraid so. She was killed in an accident just after you completed your training together at Oxford."

"Way back then? And I never knew!"

"They would have notified her next of kin. You were on your way to your next posting, and probably no one thought to ask about her friends."

She was crying softly for the friend she'd almost forgotten. "She was always so full of life. I remember how cleverly she used to imitate our instructor in the radio class."

Rand managed a little smile. "Old Carlson. He still thought he was teaching public school. There were only fourteen in our class and he still insisted on seating us alphabetically." Then, "I'm sorry."

"It's not your fault. I should never have tried to find her."

"I think somehow she's glad you did."

He didn't stay to finish his sandwich but said goodbye to Susan Waterhouse and started the drive back to Reading.

Leila was waiting when he arrived. "I didn't know when to start dinner," she said. "What kept you so late?"

"A woman with a problem. Susan Waterhouse, the one who wrote me the letter. But it led me into something far more serious. Hastings is in bad trouble."

"What sort of trouble?"

"They've spirited him away to Camelot."

"Where?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"It's the code name for one of the safe houses up near Cambridge. It's often used to debrief Soviet defectors, or for intense interrogation sessions."

"Torture?"

Rand shook his head. "Not unless things have changed since my day. But it means Hastings is probably being held there against his will, suspected of heaven knows what."

"They're out of their minds if they think Hastings is a traitor or a double-agent of some sort."

"Of course they are. But he needs help, and I suspect I'm the only one likely to give it to him. He was never a family man. He has no one to care whether he lives or dies."

"You can't get involved, Jeff. You're out of the Department. Hastings was your only real contact there. You don't know these new people, and you have no idea what Hastings might have done."

"I'm going to find out," he promised her. "Tomorrow."

It took Rand the better part of two hours to drive up to Cambridge in the morning. When he got there, he had to refresh his memory as to the location of a place he'd visited only once before. There were other safe houses scattered around the English countryside, of course, but Camelot was special, used only for the highest levels of debriefing and interrogation. It was a ten-acre estate along the Cam, downriver from the University, with an ivy-covered stone wall that provided inconspicuous security. Rand parked his car in a graveled area outside the iron gates and pressed the buzzer for admittance. Presently a kindly old lady came out of the house and walked the thirty feet to the gates.

"Now what would you be wanting?" she asked with a faint touch of brogue. "We don't buy from peddlers."

"Do I look like a peddler?" Rand asked with a smile. "I'm here to see Mr. Hastings."

"There's no one here by that name. This is the Millington house, and the family is away."

"I know what house this is. Tell them Mr. Rand is here and he's not going away."

She seemed about to argue but then thought better of it. She walked back to the house and entered through the kitchen door from which she'd appeared. He knew she'd be using the intercom to announce his arrival.

Rand lounged against the fender of his car, awaiting the next

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

development. It didn't take long. An electric-powered golf cart appeared from around the corner of the house, driven by a sour-faced man who remained in it when it came to a stop. His passenger, a white-haired gentleman with the carriage of a retired Army officer, left the cart and came over to the gate. "Now then, what's the trouble here?" he demanded.

Rand guessed at that moment there were at least two guns trained on him, one from the golf cart and the other from the kitchen. "I hope you'll let me in," he said. "I've driven a long way to Camelot, to see Hastings."

The words had their intended effect. "I'm Colonel Millington," the white-haired man said. "You must realize that just being here puts you in violation of the Official Secrets Act."

"Are you going to let me see Hastings?"

"Who told you he was here?"

Rand stepped up to the gate and stared through the bars at the white-haired man. "You know I'm no spy, Colonel. I'm sure you have my entire dossier."

Millington's face relaxed into a slight smile. "Actually, the printout is still coming off the computer. It's quite lengthy." He signaled with his hand and the man in the golf cart pushed a remote-control button. The iron gates started to open. "I needn't tell you, Mr. Rand, that any untoward actions on your part could result in your serious injury."

As Rand stepped inside, Millington took out a slender metallic device that looked like a single handcuff with a small beeper built into it. He locked it around Rand's left wrist without asking permission.

"What's that for?"

"We'll remove it when you leave. The beeper contains a small quantity of explosive which can be detonated remotely. It would blow off your hand, at the very least."

"My God! Have you people gone crazy?"

"Simply a precaution, Mr. Rand. Come this way, please."

Colonel Millington led the way into the house. It was large but quite ordinary, and seemed to have changed little since Rand's earlier visit many years back. The Colonel excused himself and Rand was kept waiting downstairs for ten minutes before he reappeared with Hastings, then left them alone.

Rand's former superior had lost some weight, but otherwise he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

seemed well. He wore a casual sportshirt and slacks, and Rand was grateful to see there was no explosive device locked to his wrist. "Good to see you, Rand," he said, extending his hand.

"And you, too. When I called on you at the Department, it was quite a shock to learn of your retirement."

"I was past my time," Hastings said. "It comes to everyone."

"Not like this."

Hastings glanced around the room. "It's comfortable here. I'm assisting them with certain inquiries."

"We both know better than that."

The older man glanced at Rand's left wrist. "I'm sorry they put that thing on you. There was no need for it."

"Maybe they think I've come here to break you loose."

Hastings smiled weakly. "No, I'm here for the duration of their inquiries."

"Suppose you tell me about it."

"A foolish business. It happened way back, during the Korean War. Most people on earth today weren't even born then. But these folks can have long memories." He'd seated himself at the other end of the sofa on which Rand sat, and he spoke casually, almost as if he were in his own home. "At least the machines have long memories."

"Oh?" Rand glanced around. They seemed to be alone in the oak-paneled study, but they both knew with certainty that their words were being recorded. Perhaps Colonel Millington viewed Rand's visit as another form of interrogation.

"They were transposing some old records onto computer discs and something came to light. You may remember that North Korea invaded the South in late June of nineteen fifty and the United Nations immediately appealed for troops to restore the peace. By the end of June, the United States had committed ground, air, and naval units to the struggle."

"I remember," Rand said. "I was part of the Calendar Network in Berlin at the time—a fresh-faced kid two years out of Oxford. I thought I knew everything."

Hastings nodded. "Shortly after the Americans entered the conflict, President Truman sent a coded message to Prime Minister Attlee outlining the steps they intended to take in Korea. Somehow a copy of the message fell into the hands of a Chinese agent and the word was passed to North Korea. There's no doubt this security leak prolonged the war and caused a great many casualties."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"How does that concern you?"

"I hand-carried the message to Downing Street. When there was an investigation of the leak, I was questioned along with some others. Nothing ever came of it, but apparently there was a notation in my personnel file. It came to light recently, as I've said. There's an internal investigation going on and they decided it was time to check me over again."

"They think you've been some sort of double-agent all your life?"

Hastings smiled weakly. "A mole, in the parlance of the fiction writers. Highly unlikely, but we live in unlikely times."

"They're trying to get a confession out of you?"

"Oh, yes. They've even offered to let me retire quietly, without a blot on my record, provided I cooperate fully. It's a tempting offer, only I have nothing to give them. I never worked for the Chinese or anyone else except my own country."

"There must be something more. What's this internal investigation you mention?"

"More foolishness. They're on a fishing expedition, trying to build their reputations. They don't care who they hurt."

"I can see that," Rand muttered, glancing at the device locked to his left wrist. He looked his former superior in the eye. "Tell me, Hastings, do you want to leave here?"

Hastings studied his face before replying. "Not under a cloud, Rand. I appreciate what you're saying, but I want to leave with my name and reputation cleared."

Rand stood up. "All right. I'll do what I can. One question—how long have you been here?"

"It's just three weeks today. That's not so bad."

"I'll have you out soon. I promise you that."

Colonel Millington returned to the room. "Ready to leave, Mr. Rand?"

"Yes."

"I'll show you to the gate."

As Millington turned toward the door, Rand moved quickly, pulling him off balance with his right hand as he hooked his left arm around the Colonel's throat from behind.

"Are you crazy?" Millington gasped.

Rand tightened his grip, pressing the handcuff against the Colonel's Adam's apple. "Unlock it, Colonel, and be quick! If I lose my hand, you lose your neck!"

"Don't! Don't be a fool!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Unlock it!"

The guard from the golf cart had rushed into the room, but Millington waved him away. "Don't do anything!" he ordered. "If the explosive is triggered, I'm a dead man!" He reached into his pocket for the key and quickly unlocked the handcuff. Rand tore it from his wrist and hurled it across the room. Only then did he release his grip on Millington.

"You'll regret this," the Colonel managed to gasp.

"I doubt it. I was only demonstrating a major flaw in your little gadget. These things really need to be field-tested before you try using them." Rand turned and waved to Hastings, who was smiling broadly for the first time. "Now I think I'll be going."

He knew the next few minutes could have gone either way, and all the way back to his car he was tensed for Colonel Millington's reaction. But none came. Perhaps the computer printout on his lengthy career, both before and after retirement, had allowed cooler heads to prevail. One thing he knew, however—he had to speak with Parkinson, the only man who could tell him what he needed to know.

On the outskirts of London, he stopped to phone the unlisted number for Double-C. There had been no reason to change it since his days as head of the Department, and he got Parkinson's secretary at once. "Yes, Mr. Rand," she said. "I'll see if Mr. Parkinson is available."

Parkinson was on the phone within seconds. "We've had a call from up north, Rand. What in hell did you think you were doing?"

"Trying to help an old friend."

"Where are you now?"

"On the motorway, the M11, close to the city. I want to meet with you."

"What happened wasn't my decision."

"You're still the only one I can talk to."

Parkinson paused, then asked, "Where?"

"The Toy Museum, in an hour. The one on Craven Hill."

Rand had used the place for occasional meetings in the past and the woman who ran the place knew him by sight. "Hello, there," she greeted him. "We haven't seen you in some time."

"I heard you had a new exhibit of toy trains."

"Right in the back, straight through that aisle."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

As Rand had hoped, there were only a couple of others in the small museum at this late-afternoon hour. He was browsing among the trains, admiring a particularly handsome Edwardian model, when Parkinson arrived.

"You must know you've created a great uproar," he told Rand. "The head of M.I.5 wants to know how you discovered Hastings was at Camelot. If they ever find out I told you—"

"They won't," Rand assured him calmly. "Not unless they were listening in when I phoned you."

"No, it's still a secure line. I have it checked daily for taps."

"The same old drill."

"It never changes."

"Tell me about Hastings and his troubles. He could only say that there were two instances, one at the beginning of his career and one more recently."

"Taken separately, they're nothing," Parkinson said as they moved into a section filled with tin toys from the Victorian era. "Together, they're the sort of oddity twisted minds thrive on. In nineteen fifty, at the beginning of the Korean War, President Truman sent a coded dispatch through regular channels to Attlee. Somewhere along the line, a copy made its way into enemy hands. Hastings was a young courier at the time and hand-carried the message to the Prime Minister because the American Ambassador was out of the country on holiday. He was never really implicated in the matter, but a note was placed in his personnel record. It came to light recently when the files were being transferred to computer discs, and someone connected it with a more recent event."

"Just a minute," Rand stopped him. "In the nineteen-fifty incident, how did we find out the enemy got a copy of the message?"

"We'd recruited a young double-agent and he told us, too late to do any good. He said someone had delivered a copy of the message to the Chinese, who managed to decode it."

So far, his account agreed closely enough with the story Hastings had told. "Go on," Rand said. "What about the recent incident?"

"It was the same sort of thing. A top-secret message about the recent unrest in China was copied and delivered to Chinese agents. It cost the life of one of our best China people."

"Why Hastings?"

"They narrowed it down to two possibilities. He was one of them."

"Somebody picked the wrong one."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"It was the nineteen-fifty report. The fools at M.I.5 think he's been in the pay of the Chinese for forty years."

"Aren't they convinced of his innocence after three weeks at Camelot?"

"With you barging in there, they don't know what to think."

Rand picked up a toy soldier dressed like a palace guard and was immediately reprimanded by the woman at the far end of the aisle. "No touching, please. You know that."

"I'm sorry." Rand hastily replaced the soldier. To Parkinson, he said, "Who was the second possibility?"

"I don't believe I should—"

"Parkinson, you made your decision on my reliability when you told me about Camelot. It's too late for second-guessing now."

Parkinson considered for seconds by the clock.

"All right," he agreed finally. "If it'll help Hastings—"

"I think it will."

"The other possibility is John Chow. He's Anglo-Chinese and is a suspect mainly for that reason. He's done contract work for us and the Americans, and he happened to be in the office the day the message was copied. There's no indication he had access to it, which is why Hastings went to Camelot and he didn't."

Rand vaguely remembered hearing Chow's name, but doubted if he'd ever met the man. "How old would he be?"

"Oh, about your age, I think. We've used him off and on for as long as I've been with Double-C."

Something was stirring in Rand's mind. It was the foggiest sort of idea, but it might be worth following up. "Where will you be this evening?"

"I'll give you my phone number."

They left the Toy Museum separately. As Rand went out the door, the woman said, "I hope you enjoyed the trains. They're delightful, aren't they?"

It was just after six and Rand took a chance that Susan Waterhouse would be in her room at the Churchill, changing for dinner. She answered his call on the second ring and seemed pleased to hear his voice.

"Mr. Rand! I was just going down for something to eat—would you be free to join me?"

"I don't believe so. I phoned mainly because I have one more

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

question. You mentioned that Evelyn Majors had a boy friend. Do you remember his name?"

"Oh, heavens no! You're asking a lot after forty years."

"Did she have any other friends or family who might remember?"

"No family. Evelyn and I were both only children whose parents had died. I suppose that was one of the things that brought us together in the first place."

"Do you think his name might come to you if you thought about it?"

"I suppose it's possible."

"Perhaps I'll join you for dinner, after all," Rand said.

He met her in the lobby at seven and escorted her into the hotel dining room. "I hate eating alone," she confessed. "When I came over here, I somehow imagined I'd hook up with Evelyn and it would be just like the old days."

"Did you have some reason for thinking she remained in England after her tour of duty?"

"She suggested it once, since she had no family to go back to. Of course, I never imagined her falling off a ferryboat and dying here."

"Was her boy friend British?"

"I think so. I mean, he lived here and all that. It's just that he was Chinese and I was never sure of his citizenship."

"Chinese!" Rand, who never believed in coincidences, asked, "Might his name have been John Chow?"

"Not John—Johnny. That's it! Johnny Chow!"

Rand leaned back in his chair. It was all becoming clear. Bizarre, unlikely—but clear. He reached for the menu, trying to keep his voice calm. "Shall we order?"

"Well, yes—but now you've raised my curiosity about Johnny Chow. How did you know his name?"

"It came up recently in another context."

"Then he's still alive and in England? I'd like to see him. He might have more information about Evelyn's death."

The conversation drifted into generalities as they ate and Rand found himself weighing the pros and cons of an arranged meeting between Chow and Susan Waterhouse. He decided it might be the quickest method of establishing Hastings' innocence. "I think I could arrange a meeting with Johnny Chow if you'd really like to see him again," he said.

"I would like that," she said, putting down her fork.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Tomorrow, then. I'll pick you up here at ten."

Later Rand called Parkinson at the number he'd been given. "Can you have John Chow in your office at ten o'clock tomorrow morning?"

"Do you mind telling me what for?"

"I'm bringing someone with me that he knew a long time ago. I want to ask him a single question, and then we'll know whether or not he's a double-agent."

"Do you know what you're doing, Rand?"

"I think so."

"I'll be sticking my neck out for you."

"Let's hope we can make it worthwhile. You'd better have a couple of security people close by, too."

In the morning, Rand picked up Susan Waterhouse promptly at ten o'clock and drove her to the building that housed the Double-C offices. This time the security guard was expecting him and Rand passed through the gate with his guest unimpeded. They took the elevator directly to the sixth floor.

Parkinson was waiting to greet them. "You must be Susan Waterhouse," he said graciously.

"Yes, I am."

"This way, please." Parkinson opened the door of a small meeting room and they stepped inside. John Chow was seated at the table between two men, his smooth oriental features impassive. He rose when he saw Susan.

"Johnny!" she exclaimed. "It's been so long!"

"It has indeed."

Rand cleared his throat. "Mr. Chow, could you tell us who this woman is?"

Chow glanced at him and then back at Susan. "I knew her when she was with the American WACs at Oxford after the war. Her name is Susan Waterhouse."

Rand sighed with relief. It was a gamble, but it had paid off. "That's all we need, Parkinson. Have him placed under guard."

John Chow started to turn away, but the guards gripped his arms.

"What is all this?" Susan asked, confused. "He told you what my name is!"

"That's just the trouble," Rand said. "You're not Susan Waterhouse. You're Evelyn Majors, and I'm afraid we must detain you, too, while we determine which of you murdered the real Susan Waterhouse . . ."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It proved to be a long day. During the first hours following Rand's revelation, people kept arriving from other departments. Both M.I.5 and M.I.6 were represented, and he was startled at one point—around noon—to see Colonel Millington arrive from Camelot. Millington gave him a distasteful look but managed a half hearted greeting.

Finally, when Parkinson had whittled the crowd down to the most important half dozen or so, Rand began to speak.

"I learned a long time ago that there are very few coincidences in this business. When I found out Hastings had been at Camelot for three weeks, it seemed to link up somehow with the letter from Susan Waterhouse that I received two weeks ago. At first I couldn't see any connection at all, but then this Chinese element appeared. A copy of a nineteen-fifty message that fell into the hands of the Chinese and a copy of a recent message that suffered the same fate. Since I have complete faith in Hastings, I felt certain that John Chow was responsible for the most recent act."

"But there's nothing to link him with the first episode, forty years ago," Parkinson protested.

"I wondered about that, so I set out to find a connection. We know the top-secret message from Truman to Attlee was sent through normal channels, and young Hastings of the courier service hand-delivered it because the American Ambassador was out of the country. The implication couldn't be clearer. The message was relayed to the American embassy here in London for delivery to the Prime Minister. Since it would have been still encoded, it seemed perfectly safe to have it delivered by courier.

"But suppose a copy was made before it was given to Hastings at the embassy? Was there anyone who might have done that? I remembered Susan Waterhouse. You told me she'd served three years at the American embassy in London after completing her Oxford training in nineteen forty-eight."

"Of course! She would still have been there when the Korean War broke out!"

"Exactly. And that brought me to the interesting problem of her good friend's death. Evelyn Majors apparently fell to her death from a ferryboat, though I never mentioned that fact to Susan. I simply said she died in an accident. Yet later Susan herself mentioned Evelyn's fall from a ferryboat. She'd known all along, and her reason for contacting me had been nothing but a lie. She'd mentioned further that Evelyn had a boy friend—and later admitted that this boy friend was an Anglo-Chinese youth named Johnny Chow."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Parkinson nodded. "That links Evelyn with Chow, but how did you know Susan Waterhouse was dead and Evelyn Majors had switched identities with her?"

"The false Susan told me something when I first met her for lunch at the Savoy. She had to mention it because it was the thing I'd be most likely to remember. She'd sat ahead of me in radio class at Oxford. We'd never been friendly—I was probably intimidated by American women in Army uniforms, and people change over forty years so she was fairly certain I wouldn't remember which WAC went with which name. But there was an odd thing about that class, which I remembered later. The instructor had come from a public school and still insisted on seating his students alphabetically. There's no way Susan Waterhouse could have sat in front of me. The WAC in front of me had to have been Evelyn Majors."

One of the others was ready to argue the point. "Waterhouse might have been her married name. When she was at Oxford she might have been Susan Powell, say, or Susan Quentin."

Rand shook his head. "She told me her husband's name was Simpson. You see, the substitution wasn't that hard to bring off, even though they were both in the military. Both were only children with no living parents. They were the same height and almost looked like sisters. When Evelyn's boy friend Johnny Chow heard that Susan had gotten the prime posting to the American embassy, he decided that's where he wanted Evelyn. I think the two girls were traveling together on that cross-channel ferry. It would have been easy enough for Evelyn to switch purses, ID, and dogtags with her friend—and the body was no doubt badly damaged. Johnny Chow's people could easily have changed the photo and thumbprint that appear on all Army ID cards. Evelyn showed up at the American embassy with her friend's ID and orders, and became Susan Waterhouse."

"But what brought her back forty years later?"

"Chow must have stayed in touch with her all these years, never letting her forget how she betrayed her country and helped to kill her friend. I suspect Chow gave the crucial shove, but Evelyn must have been there. He was concerned about the investigation, and about your questioning Hastings. He knew I had inside connections, so the false Susan returned to England to learn what I knew and what I could find out."

"She called attention to her missing friend."

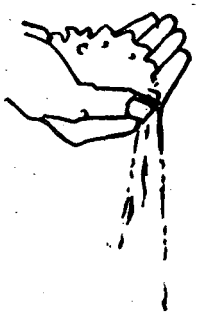
"It was a good ploy to get me involved. If I'd learned too much,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Chow would simply have killed me. However, when I brought them together and asked him that question, he had to lie. He couldn't admit the switch, yet as Evelyn's boy friend he wouldn't have confused the two."

When the session came to an end, Parkinson drew him aside. "Hastings is in his office. Millington brought him back. He's feeling a bit bitter. Talks about really retiring. Do you think you can persuade him to stay?"

"I don't know," Rand said. "I'll give it a try." He started down the hall to Hastings' office.



IMPORTANT NOTICE TO SUBSCRIBERS

All subscription orders and mail regarding subscriptions, including change of address, should be sent to Ellery Queen, P.O. Box 7052, Red Oak, Iowa 51591.

For change of address, please advise 6 to 8 weeks before moving. Send your current mailing label with new address.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* short story by

GEORGE BAXT

Cole Armus was putting the finishing touches to Ada Quincey, who had fallen off a stepladder and broken her neck while trying to rescue her cat Caesar from an apple tree. His new sweetheart, Jasmine White, stood next to him, clucking her tongue in disapproval as he painted delicate cat whiskers on each side of Ada's narrow mouth.

"I don't think that's funny, Cole."

"She loved cats, didn't she? Well, this is how I think Ada should look when she meets her maker. Hell, Jasmine, I'm not your ordinary run-of-the-mill mortician . . ."

DRINK TO ME ONLY

by GEORGE BAXT

When the meek inherited the earth, Djemma Barnes didn't get her share. At the age of twenty-six, the homely and simple-minded Djemma found her future behind the soda fountain of the Panhandle Confectionary Store. The customers found Djemma as tiresome as nouvelle cuisine—that is, those customers who were fortunate enough to have traveled to the big city and had had a taste of the French-originated disgrace. Away from the soda fountain, Djemma had little to offer. She was short and had a physique about as alluring as an ironing board. Her skin had the color and texture of cigar ash. Yet Djemma did have an ambition. She was hoping someday that Cole Armus would hop across the counter, crush her in his arms, and ravage her in full view of everyone in the store.

Cole Armus was the town's sole mortician. He enjoyed telling the occasional stranger that this was a one-hearse town. He had inher-

© 1990 by George Baxt.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ited the business from his father, who had taught him all there was to know about sending a body to the local bone yard. Cole was an apt pupil and brought to the business a number of improvements. When nasty old MacGregor died, Cole fixed his right arm so that he thumbed his nose at everyone even in death. He sent the local practical joker across with a beanie on his head and his left eye winking waggishly. Cole was a real card, and just about everyone in town adored him—except Winnie, his estranged girl friend. Cole had dumped Winnie Trask for Jasmine White, the new grade-school teacher. Winnie, who was slightly intelligent, had managed to read some of W. Somerset Maugham, so she knew that a woman scorned is a vessel of wrath.

Cole's rejection would have hurt less if there were other marriageable prospects in town. There were actually about four, but they were in their teens and Winnie was battling thirty. Winnie came from a long line of fighters. Her great-great-great-grandfather had been a drummer boy in the Civil War. The fact that he had turned tail and run at Shiloh was attributed to the fact that the foliage had played hob with his hay fever. Winnie was not about to turn tail and run. Over a mountainous and ruinous banana split she confided in Djemma Barnes, "I'm going to fight to win Cole back."

Win Cole back. Had Winnie heard Djemma's heart do a backflip and land on its backside? Djemma asked with her chronic wide-eyed innocence, "How do you win a man back?"

"You just watch me. You'll see."

"Chocolate syrup's dribblin' down to your chin."

Winnie's horrifying tongue soon corrected that.

"Where'd you learn to make up your face?"

"This?" Winnie admired her waxen countenance in the mirror behind Djemma. "Cole fixed me up."

"Gosh," said Djemma, looking the way Sissy Spacek looked in every movie she made, "you look pretty enough to bury."

Winnie favored Djemma with a wink, smacked her lips, and wiped her mouth with a paper napkin. "You just leave it to old Winnie. She'll get her man back—" adding, somewhat ominously "—or else."

Djemma was mixing a raspberry float for Mrs. MacGruder, who this morning had decided to go off her thirty-day diet, most of which she had eaten in twenty-five days, anyway. "You know something, Winnie?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I know plenty, babe," said Winnie, thwacking the knee of her crossed leg.

"I kind of like Cole, too."

"You?"

"Yes, me."

"Haw haw."

"You got no right giving me the horse laugh. I got a right to like a fellow if I want to."

It was one of those rare occasions in Winnie's life when she felt compassion for another woman. Poor dumpy Djemma Barnes was in love with Cole Armus and Cole ever loving her was about as likely as her winning the state lottery.

"Sure, honey—you got every right to fancy him. But, honey, take it from a woman of experience—about the only chance you got of him touching you is when you're on the slab getting made up for your final appearance."

Djemma bit her lower lip as a lonely tear trickled down her cheek. "I get so little out of life, Winnie. All I do is read *Sleazy* every week when I'm on line at the supermarket. Do you really think Kevin Costner is the father of a two-headed baby?"

"Don't you read your Bible any more?"

Djemma blushed and said shyly, "Only the racy parts."

"Why, you poor kid. You really got it bad for Cole."

"Real bad."

While the girls were chatting across the banana split, which was beginning to resemble cold lava, Cole Armus was putting the finishing touches to Ada Quincey, who had fallen off a stepladder and broken her neck while trying to rescue her cat Caesar from an apple tree. His new sweetheart, Jasmine White, stood next to him, clucking her tongue in disapproval as he painted delicate cat whiskers on each side of Ada's narrow mouth.

"I don't think that's funny, Cole."

"She loved cats, didn't she? Well, this is how I think Ada should look when she meets her maker. Hell, Jasmine, I'm not your ordinary run-of-the-mill mortician. I don't drain them and embalm them and shove them into their Sunday best and send them on their way looking anonymous. Damn it, I'm an artiste. I like to add that extra touch that makes my corpses special." He looked at her dreamily. "I wish I could get to do the major. I'd fix that crook up real good,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with a runny nose and his tongue hanging kind of lopsided out of his mouth."

Jasmine decided to change the subject to something ethereal. "Cole, did you really mean it when you asked me to marry you?"

"Of course I meant it."

"Did you ever ask Winnie Trask to marry you?"

Cole thought for a moment. "Once." He added, lying, "But I didn't mean it. Has she been acting mean to you when you meet up by accident?"

"No. As a matter of fact, she's very nice to me. Sometimes I think she's a little too nice."

"Aw, honey, Winnie's a real good sport. When she was on the girl's hockey team that time they lost to the Visitors, she cracked open the skull of one of the players she lost to, but then visited her in the hospital with flowers and candy and her defense lawyer. Everyone was glad for Winnie when the judge let her off with a warning, even though the other kid died from the brain damage."

Jasmine suppressed a shudder as she watched Cole putting the finishing touches to Ada. As she looked at him, she wondered why she loved him. True, he wasn't bad-looking. His crooked teeth could always be straightened and capped, and as for that crude way he had of wiping his nose on his sleeve or wiping his mouth with a corner of the tablecloth at meals, well, she was a teacher and a couple of hard whacks with a straight-edged ruler could teach him a thing or two. There was also that cunning trick she had of adding vinegar to morning coffee—he'd sure learn from that.

"Where you going?" rasped Cole as she headed out the double-door to the back alley, the doors through which the coffins made their grand exit.

"I told you before, honey. I got some shopping to do."

"You can't kid me—you're going to the Panhandle for your daily fix. A triple-chocolate/strawberry milk float with three scoops of ice cream and a raw egg."

"I don't have the raw egg in it any more. Cholesterol, you know."

"Be a sweetie and bring me back a double-scoop cone with Tutti Frutti and Rum Raisin and lots of chocolate sprinkles."

"No lemon fizz to wash it down?"

"Sure. Now ain't you a darling to remember that?"

"How can I forget? I introduced you to lemon fizz." She sang softly, "Drink to me only wi-hith thine eyes—"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Honey bun," said Cole softly while his index finger coyly touched the tip of Ada Quincey's nose, "that's when you really won me."

Poor Winnie Trask, thought Jasmine, if she ever finds out she was defeated by lemon fizz.

Winnie Trask's mother stared at the ceiling of her sewing room. Winnie's room was directly above it and Winnie was walking back and forth, back and forth. That girl is truly troubled, thought Mrs. Trask, mending her one good girdle. She just might walk herself back and forth into a nervous breakdown.

On the walls of Winnie's room were tacked pictures of Don Johnson, William Hurt, Kevin Kline, and the Jolly Green Giant, just some of the men she really found sexy. But at this moment her mind wasn't on sex. Her mind was on Cole Armus and Jasmine White. She'd been in the Panhandle working on her second banana split (on the house, which is why she self-indulged) when Jasmine White came in for her milk float. How she mustered up all that phony enthusiasm when Jasmine entered, she'd just never know. Maybe she should have been the actress her mother was positive she'd become when she played Little Eva in the Kiwanis Club production of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. It was too bad she fell off the makeshift swing that was lifting her to heaven after Little Eva died. It was her broken back that stopped her from acting lessons.

"Why, Jasmine White—look what you've done to your hair!"

"Do you really like it?"

"I mean the way you get that strange matted look. Did you find it in *Vogue* magazine?"

"Well, actually," said Jasmine, climbing onto the stool next to Winnie's, "it was in *National Geographic*."

"Well, aren't you original? Djemma—isn't Jasmine original?"

"What? Isn't she what?" Djemma had a little book in her hand at which she was sneaking a peek.

"What's that book you've got there, Djemma? Why you trying to hide it?"

"It's nothing! It's nothing at all!"

Swifter than lightning in a corn field, Winnie whisked the book out of Djemma's hand and read the title aloud. "*Gypsy Love Potions*. Well, I'll be damned! Where'd you get this?"

"It's my aunt's. My Aunt Elfrida, the spinster."

Jasmine chipped in. "What are you reading something like that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for? Why aren't you reading something uplifting—like a novel by Danielle Steele?"

Djemma's face had reddened and she wished the floor would open up so she could drop into the cellar where Mr. Gribbon, the store owner, hid his supply of cocaine.

Winnie said slyly, "Djemma's in love."

"You shut up, Winnie!" shouted Djemma, and everyone in the store turned and stared at her. It was the loudest they had ever heard her ever. In embarrassment, Djemma twisted her apron strings and lowered her head.

Jasmine inquired of Djemma with a welcomed sincerity, "Is he someone nice?"

Djemma managed a reply. "Sort of. Yes."

"I'm so glad for you," said Jasmine. "They say that falling in love is wonderful—and it really is."

Winnie countered with, "And they also say that unrequited love's a bore."

Jasmine let the remark go by and ordered her float. "I've been watching Cole doing Ada Quincey's face."

"What a fun way to spend an afternoon," said Winnie. "I suppose you and Cole will be at the dance Saturday night."

Jasmine couldn't resist the opportunity Winnie gave her. "Of course. That's when we intend to announce our engagement." She thought she heard Djemma gurgle something of a sob, but she couldn't be sure. Djemma had jammed a ladyfinger in her mouth and then started choking. Jasmine looked at Winnie and gasped. "Why, Winnie Trask, you've gone all white—like Cole might have drained all the blood out of you!"

"You two are really getting married?" Djemma didn't recognize Winnie's voice at all. It sounded like it was coming from long-distance, courtesy of a tornado.

"Yes, we are. Winnie, do you think it's too awful to live above the funeral parlor? Do you think I could talk Cole into moving somewhere less deadly?"

"I don't know," said Winnie as she pushed the second banana split away from her, most of it uneaten. "I just don't know."

Djemma said to Winnie, "Can I have my book back, please? I've got to sneak it back into Aunt Elfrida's room before she finds it missing."

Winnie absent-mindedly opened the book and flipped some pages before handing it back to Djemma. She looked at Djemma with a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

new interest. "Do you really think gypsy love potions work, Djemma?"

"You know something—I ain't never tried one? But, well, you have to believe in something, don't you? I mean, if you've got nothing to believe in, what's the point in living?"

"Djemma, you're a real surprise sometimes."

Winnie stopped pacing her room and looked at herself in the wall mirror. She was still the same old Winnie Trask. Nothing looked changed. It was too bad mirrors couldn't reflect what went on inside a person—this mirror would show a change all right!

Mrs. Trask heard her daughter slam the door to her bedroom and come clomping down the stairs with purpose. "Stop all that stomping, Winnie—it sounds like your lousy father's still alive, God forbid! Where you going now?"

"Out to the potting shed. I'm going to do something about that crab grass in the back yard."

"And about time, too! *Ouch!*" She had stabbed herself with a needle. She always did herself a minor injury when she thought about her late husband, the wife beater. While sucking the injured finger, she thought of the night her husband had taken a hefty swig of bourbon and keeled over dead. The neighbors heard her shriek, "Heart attack! Heart attack!" as she carried the can of weed killer back to the potting shed.

Djemma Barnes was having a sleepless night. She tossed and turned and sighed and cried and got up for a glass of water and then sat in the window seat staring out at Cole's funeral parlor across the road.

Marry. He's marrying Jasmine. How can he do this to me and Winnie? How can he do this? And to Jasmine White—a stranger! She's not even town-born. She's an alien. She's probably from outer space. Her students adore her. I'll bet she's a witch. That's what she did to Cole—she enchanted him. I'll bet she fed him a love potion. I'll bet she slipped it into one of his lemon fizzes. A gypsy love potion!

Winnie Trask was in the Panhandle bright and early the next morning. Djemma Barnes, she thought to herself, was looking worse than usual, like a dead body left out in the sun for more than a week or so. "Why, Djemma darling," she gushed unnaturally, "you look as pretty as the cover of a seed catalogue."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I'm not feeling too good. What are you doing here so early? Couldn't you sleep last night?"

"Slept as good as if I'd spent the night in the arms of darling Ron Darling."

"You're lying."

"You're right. Djemma, I've come to a very important decision."

"About what?"

"Pour me a cup of decaf and I'll tell you."

Djemma obeyed the order and then, with elbows on the counter and hands supporting her chin, she awaited Winnie's important decision. Winnie sipped the coffee, made a face, and then locked eyes with Djemma's.

"Djemma, I'm going to make the supreme sacrifice."

"What do you mean?"

Winnie lowered her voice to a half whisper. "I know I'll never win Cole Armus back from Jasmine White. I know that for sure now that they're announcing their official engagement—but that doesn't mean somebody else can't win him away from Jasmine."

"Who?"

"You."

"Me?"

"You."

"Oh, that's crazy."

"No, it isn't. Djemma, lean closer." Djemma leaned closer. "Djemma, I know that gypsy love potions can work."

Djemma gasped and Winnie cautioned her to hush up.

"I think you're right!" whispered Djemma excitedly. "I think that's how maybe Jasmine got Cole away from you! I was thinking last night, which is why I couldn't sleep, that Jasmine might've slipped a gypsy love potion into his lemon fizz."

"Exactly! Two great minds! Well, Djemma honey, you'd like a crack at Cole yourself, wouldn't you?"

"Oh, to dream the impossible dream!"

Winnie reached into her pocket and carefully handed Djemma a cheap pill box.

"What's this?" Djemma asked.

"Don't open it now. Mr. Gribbon might see you. It's a gypsy love potion. I made it myself."

"Where'd you learn how?"

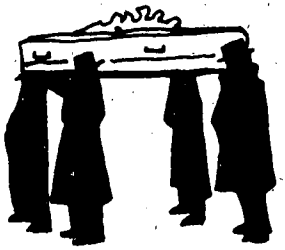
"My momma has the very same book you showed me yesterday."

"What a coincidence."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Beats hell. I made it for you, honey. You deserve your chance at happiness. Now this afternoon, when Jasmine orders Cole's lemon fizz—"

"I know just what to do!" said Djemma, her eyes alive for the first time since she was born, her cheeks burning with desire and hope. "I know just what to do!"



DETECTIVERSE

THE MOST SUSPECTED PERSON

by RENA GARTER KUNIS

He hadn't any alibi,
There was a bloodstain on his tie,
He was the victim's only heir,
They'd quarreled with a witness there,
The door was locked, he had a key,
When questioned he had tried to flee,
His fingerprints were on the gun—
Guess what? He was the guilty one!
Which, gentle reader, goes to show
In mysteries you never know.

© 1990 by Rena Garter Kunis.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DID YOU MISS ANY OF THESE CLASSIC ELLERY QUEEN ANTHOLOGIES?

11 DEADLY SINS

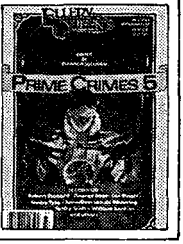
Let the devil and Ellery Queen take you along the tangled paths of vice and sin. 21 fascinating and horrifying stories. Sin has its own rewards, *but* is it worth the price? You decide. Read 11 DEADLY SINS.

MORE MEDIA FAVORITES

More media favorites brings you just that! These stories so enjoyed by mystery readers, that they were made into movies, television shows and plays. Each story so cunningly told, you won't be able to resist every mind absorbing word.

PRIME CRIMES 5

Some of the most surprising crimes ever to be told or committed. Crimes that involve sisters, brothers, a green-haired suspect and even the universally appealing teddy bear. Evil can come from the most unexpected sources. Beware.



BAD SCENES

The Dictionary of American Slang defines a bad scene as "Something unpleasant, esp. an unpleasant experience." Without question, the twenty-five stories in this new Ellery Queen anthology meet this qualification. Enjoy this chilling collection of tales.

MEDIA FAVORITES

Short stories so popular and well-crafted that they are adapted for other media. Radio and Broadway. Movies and T.V. These stories have shown up in past years and recent years in the most unexpected places including the television series, Tales of the Unexpected.

PRIME CRIMES 4

The fourth of *Ellery Queen's Prime Crimes* mystery stories never before published in the U.S., most of them never before published anywhere focuses, as the title indicates, on crime, both organized and disorganized. (Several are *very* disorganized.) Enjoy it.

Please send me the ELLERY QUEEN anthologies indicated. Enclosed is my check or money order for $_____. HCGC-3

Mail to: **ELLERY QUEEN ANTHOLOGIES**
P.O. Box 40
Vernon, NJ 07462

NAME_____

ADDRESS_____

CITY_____ STATE____ ZIP____

Please allow 6 to 8 weeks for delivery. Available only in the U.S.

FEATURED

- ☐ #60 11 DEADLY SINS ($4.50)
- ☐ #59 MORE MEDIA FAVORITES ($4.50)
- ☐ #58 MEDIA FAVORITES ($4.50)
- ☐ #57 PRIME CRIMES 5 ($4.50)
- ☐ #56 BAD SCENES ($4.50)
- ☐ #55 PRIME CRIMES 4 ($4.50)

ALSO AVAILABLE

- ☐ #51 PRIME CRIMES 2 ($3.50)
- ☐ #49 CRIMES AND PUNISHMENTS ($3.50)
- ☐ #48 PRIME CRIMES ($3.50)
- ☐ #47 LOST MEN ($3.50)
- ☐ ANTHOLOGY #44 ($3.95)
- ☐ ANTHOLOGY #42 ($3.50)
- ☐ ANTHOLOGY #41 ($3.50)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* short story by

JACQUELINE BABBIN

Leeta ignored the sly smirks Ziggy's name elicited. She was convinced that those who called him a sleaze and warned her about his reputation as a womanizer were merely jealous of her rapid climb. After all, she wasn't doing anything any different than she'd done down home, and all that had gotten her was a job soda-jerking.

A fable for our time, from Jacqueline Babbin, whose first appearance in EQMM this is. Her acclaimed novels featuring Clovis Kelley, Bloody Special *and* Bloody Soaps, *are published by International Polygonics . . .*

THE NOTORIOUS MISS L.

by JACQUELINE BABBIN

By the third day, the headlines read LEETA AND THE SWINE. Once again New York embraced a heroine of its own. Fawn, Jessica, and Donna were not only out of state, they were out of sight. History.

Born Willie Pearl Egglestrom, she knew she would have to change her name from the first time she tried to say it. If *she* couldn't pronounce, spell, or remember it, who would? Even as a small tyke, she instinctively knew that the right name would lead her to success. She mouthed the beauty of Sukreet. *She* had changed her name.

Oh, to have single-name notoriety! To be Jackie or Cher or Liz. Just to stand alone, not even attached to another—as in Nancy and Ron or Robin and Mike. She wanted a name that would be short, feminine, and original. One that would express who she was. And so at nine (going on forty), she devised Leeta: short enough for headlines and long enough for recognition, without being a nick-

© 1990 by Jacqueline Babbin.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

name. Leeta. She would make sure that one day "Leeta" would be in banner headlines beyond the scope of supermarket tabloids.

She was well aware of her many attributes. She had inherited her mother's nerve and her father's dark, handsome features—reduced, thankfully, to female size. She grew up in front of the tube, studying. Imitating the pronunciation of anchor people on news programs so that the accents of her birthplace—Strawberry, Tennessee—would be erased. Commercials became her tutors in dress, makeup, and hair, movies her guide to mannerisms, magazines her mentors. With jobs as a checkout at the 7-Eleven and waitress at the Strawberry Soda, she diligently saved money for her escape.

Then, one fairy-tale day a nattily dressed man appeared at her table at the Strawberry Soda and asked for a chocolate malted. It was obvious he was just passing through on his way to some unknown, exotic place. As she gave him his check, he asked her name. "Leeta," she said without hesitation and flashed her dazzling toothpaste smile. He told her if she ever got to New York to look him up, and handed her a card which read: *Zachary Epstein, Agent.*

"But my friends call me Ziggy," he said, tipping her an overly generous $5.00, and off he rode in his shining red Mercedes.

So, at sixteen—armed with her new name and Ziggy's card—Leeta arrived in New York, headed for fame. She knew that fortune would follow. Too short to be a model, she became an actress-in-waiting. Waiting for that break that would catapult her into Stardom. Longing for the lifestyles of the rich and famous, she studied acting by day and waited table by night. Late nights, she studied with Ziggy. She was a very quick study—so quick, that within two months Ziggy had arranged for her to be an extra in a Lumet film shooting in New York, an Under Five in the soap opera *Two Lives To Live*, and a reading with Joe Papp's casting director.

She ignored the sly smirks Ziggy's name elicited. She was convinced that those who called him a sleaze and warned her about his reputation as a womanizer were merely jealous of her rapid climb. After all, she wasn't doing anything different than she'd done down home, and all that had gotten her was a job soda-jerking. Here she was already well on her way in the Big Apple. No other Egglestrom had ever gone so far.

And then it happened—the break she was waiting for. Ziggy's friend, the red-haired producer Ginger Vitis, agreed to see her for the possible lead in his next film. She was to meet him in his glam-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

orous highrise apartment on the East Side. Ziggy would join them later, so that Ginger could audition her without any distraction.

Leeta dressed in her best Ziggy-selected clothes. Spandexed in electric-blue from shoulder to ankle, her new finger-in-a-light-socket permanent adding inches to her height, she liked what she saw in the mirrored elevator as she rode up to Penthouse B on the thirty-first floor. Ginger, a slight, nervous man, ushered her into his all-beige living room and up to the elegant chrome bar. He mixed her requested Shirley Temple without comment and toasted her with a gimlet, then guided her over to the eight-foot circular couch and started to tell her about his project.

As she sipped her drink, he described the female lead in his film, *Hard Socks*. She would be perfect. Ziggy sure knew how to pick them. However, there was an all-important nude scene at the climax of the film for which he really had to evaluate her body. She could disrobe right here and now or, if she preferred to take it in steps, there was a robe on the bathroom door at the end of the hall.

She opted for the slow reveal and, finishing her drink, went to the luxurious marble bathroom and donned the white terrycloth robe. She felt as if she were moving under water. Everything seemed to be slowing down. Certainly it couldn't have been the drink—not a Shirley Temple. She slow-walked back to the couch and sank gratefully onto it. What was *wrong* with her?

When she came to, she was still lying on the couch. Her robe was open. On the beige carpet between the couch and the huge glass coffee table was Ziggy, a smile on his face and a spreading red stain on his striped shirtfront! Then she felt something metallic in her right hand. It was a small pistol. She tossed it away from her and called for Ginger. When he didn't answer, she went searching for him. He was nowhere to be found. Then she called the police.

When the police arrived, a fatherly Detective Coral O'Brien questioned her and a sweet-faced young cop wrote down everything she said. She proudly pointed out that she hadn't touched a thing. As she told her simple, bewildering tale, she noticed that more policemen of all ranks were gathering around to watch and listen. Sizing up her situation, she knew this was her moment.

No, she said, she didn't have any idea what had happened. No, she had no reason to kill Ziggy—he was the kindest, dearest man—her protector in this evil city. Now she was friendless, bereft.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

She put to devastating effect all she had learned in acting classes. The tears started and grew into a river. Who could she turn to now? Who could help this poor, confused child?

By the time she was arraigned at the Tombs, the television cameras were covering her for the Eleven O'Clock News.

The front page of the early-morning edition of the *Post* carried her tear-stained face in closeup with the headline ACTRESS KILLS AGENT.

"That headline will get her a lot of friends," said Bullwhip Casey, the famous criminal lawyer. He arrived at the jail at dawn, prepared to post bail for her, but he was too late. His rival, Big Milton Powzer, had already sprung her and taken her under his wing. "Listen, kid," he told her, "you need protection from the sharks. They'll smell a goldmine."

"Goldmine?" said Leeta.

"Don't worry, kid—Big Milt will steer you through the murky waters. Not only will I get you off, we'll both be rich and famous."

"But how, Mr. Powzer?"

"Call me Big Milt, kid. I know the right buttons to push in the right places. You'll be the newest fad of the smart set. Hell, nothing worth one titillated headline has happened in New York since Klaus or the Mayflower Madam. On the advice of your attorney, Big Milt, you are to say nothing to nobody, got it?"

"Will I have to go on trial for murder?"

"Could be. But not until we're ready."

"But I'm not guilty, Mr. Big Milt!" She stifled a sob.

"I figure you were framed."

"I was?" she asked with astonishment.

"Not a new script. Vitis laces your drink. Ziggy arrives and pulls a gun to defend your honor. But Vitis nails Ziggy, puts the gun in your hand, and splits."

"I don't remember anything," Leeta wailed.

"Don't worry, kid, you will. And we'll snag Vitis. That King of Porn won't travel far."

"King of Porn? What does that mean?"

Big Milt patted her hand and looked deep into her eyes. "How did I get so lucky? I better not let you out of my sight."

And so Leeta went to live at the Helmsley Palace Hotel, where Big Milt said he kept a suite for out-of-town clients. Luxury Limos

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

donated a stretch to drive her around. Mr. Thom, the renowned makeup and hair stylist, volunteered the services of his salon. Kolor Konsultants begged for the opportunity to create her best auras. Defense-4-U offered her free karate lessons. Confronted with sponsorship bids from eight Seventh Avenue design houses, Big Milt chose the one with no celebrity connections who agreed to call their new dress line "Leeta."

While Mr. Thom restyled the young starlet, Milton Powzer sifted through the assorted offers for TV talk-show appearances and movies, book contracts, magazine interviews, shopping-mall appearances, and cruise-ship lectures. His yuppie Brooks Brothered assistant, Safe Haven, sorted out the social invitations and photo opportunities.

Tinged with danger—did she or did she not kill a man?—Leeta presented an exciting challenge to hostesses eagerly competing to serve the newest scandal along with the *nouvelle*est cuisine. Her name transferred from gossip columns to society columns on to charity events. Would she appear in a movie of her life? She wasn't sure she'd still be out of jail, Leeta said, ask her lawyer. She'd always been a quick study.

Her calendar was full. A weekend in Easthampton with the Marquis de L. and his ambiguous lover, Lady (or was it Lord?) R. An overnight in Westport with that Oscar-winning couple. Judge of the Miss Teens contest in Newport. A gala at the Metropolitan Opera, the Ball at the Metropolitan Museum, press box at the Mets. Lunch with an ambassador, tea with a prince, and cocktails with a rock star were topped by first night at the new Sondheim musical, followed by the cast party. And now she had an open invitation to an excursion on a certain royal yacht, but she had to set the date when she would be available.

"Oh, Safe," she said as Haven dropped her off at her hotel suite after the cast party, "do you think I can get away for about a week soon?"

"I'm not sure."

"What do you mean?" She opened the door. "Why not?"

"Well, I shouldn't be telling you this, but I think Big Milt has a bead on Ginger Vitis and will be able to prove you were framed." Safe followed her into the suite as he always did, and carefully opened doors, spied behind drapes, and peered under the king-size bed. "Don't worry, little girl, this will all soon be over and you'll be a liberated woman."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"What are you saying?" her voice quavered. "I won't *have* a trial? But no one's ever heard my story."

"Even if you do have a trial, chances are Big Milt wouldn't let you take the stand."

"Why not?" she demanded.

"Some of these prosecuting attorneys can be pretty rough," Safe explained. "It's safer for you. And when Big Milt charms a jury, he's headlines all the way."

"Then I won't go to jail?" she asked fearfully.

"If Big Milt can make the deal he wants to get Vitis extradited and nailed on a tax charge, you'll be free as a bird," Safe assured her. "You won't have a thing to worry about. You'll be able to go on with your life, back to normal. Who knows—you might even be a footnote in his autobiography."

"Safe," Leeta asked in a small voice, "will you see Big Milt tomorrow?"

"I see him every day. First thing in the morning."

"Would he have a few minutes for me, do you think?"

"Sure," Safe replied confidently.

"Would you be a dear and tell him I'll be by to see him. Around ten?" Standing on tiptoe, she kissed his cheek and watched him blush. "Goodnight, Safe," she whispered. She put the Do Not Disturb sign on the door and closed it after him. She had a lot of thinking to do.

The next morning, clad in her serious grey aura, she presented herself at Mr. Thom's for a sedate coif. At ten sharp, Luxury Limos dropped her off at Milton Powzer's office in one of the older Park Avenue buildings. She told the driver not to wait, she might be there for some time.

She took the elevator to the twenty-second floor and announced herself to the receptionist, who acknowledged her with a tight-lipped smile. After keeping her waiting a few minutes, Big Milt ushered her into his office. As always, he sat on his huge desk, facing close to her chair, and took his time lighting one of his fat cigars. "Well, kid," he said, "what can I do for you today?"

"Mr. Big Milt," Leeta said, with her best wide-eyed, low-mascaraed look, "I know you've been working hard with all these negotiations and everything, but when will I have—I think it's called—a deal for something?"

"Now if that don't beat all!" he chortled, spewing cigar ash. "You

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

shouldn't be worrying your pretty little head about business. Just leave all that to Big Milt. These things take time, you know."

"What about my cover story in *Time?*"

"Well, they seem to think that, as the big brains, I might have more universal appeal for a cover."

"And the movie?" she asked, her voice rising.

"Face it, kid—Son of Sam you're not."

"But what about my trial?" she asked, allowing a worried tone to modulate her voice.

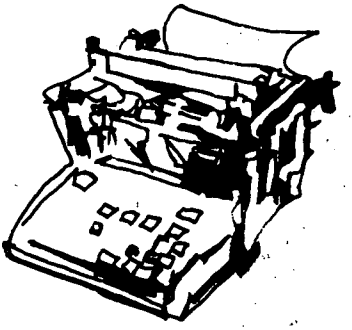
Powzer blew smoke and waited for a huge smoke ring to form before he graced her with a smile. "I wasn't going to tell you until it was definite, but I think I've really done it, kid. No trial. No jail. I guarantee you're off scot free. You're one lucky little girl to have met up with Milton Powzer."

Leeta considered him. "Maybe *you* weren't so lucky to have met up with *Leeta,*" she said, lunging from the chair.

"Hey—whoa, kid!" he said, standing up. "What's this all about?"

"This!" she said, landing a deadly, well rehearsed karate chop. As he fell to the lushly carpeted floor, she practiced her violated scream. It was very successful.

The headline read: LEETA POWS POWZER. She was still ahead of Bess and Leona with a whole new chapter. Bullwhip Casey saw to that. He even signed a paper promising her a full turn on the witness stand that would make Hedda look healthy. She may have been christened Willie Pearl Egglestrom, but the title on the biography was to be THE NOTORIOUS LEETA.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DETECTIVERSE

STOOL PIGEON

by LEO CORBY

Under a tree, on a high stone wall,
Sat a little bird who saw it all—
The mugger who took the twenty quid,
Then silenced his victim by what he did.
The old man was fighting for his life
When the mugger cut him with his knife—
Three times he cut and then he run
Away from the murderous deed he done,
Never looking to the top of the wall
Where sat the bird who saw it all.
The mugger thought he could get away,
But in fact he was caught that very same day.
As soon as the birdie got down from the wall,
She immediately made a telephone call—
She called the police and, said she,
The killer's name was Simon Magee.
He was tried and found guilty of his foul deed
And sentenced to death, the jury decreed—
And all because a bird saw it all
From under a tree on a high stone wall.
But this bird was not feathered—I think you can see
That a beautiful damsel sat under that tree.
Her eyes were blue, she had golden hair,
And ruby-red lips she was going to share
On that very same day with Simon Magee,
Who didn't know she sat under that tree
And who at this moment is swinging gaily
From a length of hemp at the rear of Old Bailey.
There is a moral, don't you see?
Never commit murder under a tree
Or anywhere near a high stone wall,
Where some bird may sit and see it all.

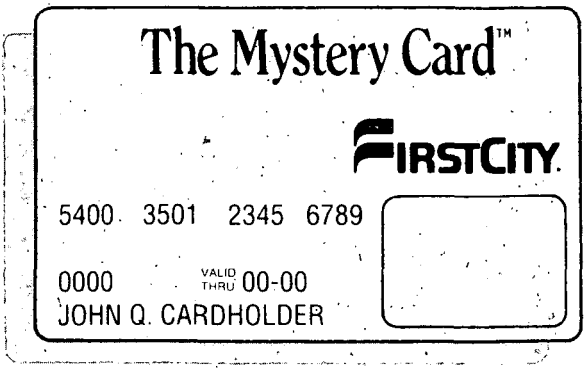
© 1990 by Leo Corby.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mystery

Take the Mystery Out of Credit Cards

With the First Credit Card for Mystery Readers!



As a reader of *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* you enjoy red herrings, twisted endings, and the surprises that make mystery reading such a pleasure. But no one likes to be surprised in areas of personal finance.

With all the confusion surrounding credit cards these days...interest rates, grace periods, and other details...we're pleased that First City is offering a MasterCard to our readers that will not require you to hire a private investigator, or an attorney, to help you decipher the benefits.

"The Mystery Card"

The unique gothic mansion design expresses your interest in finding clues and solving mysteries.

Your use of "The Mystery Card" will help solve one of the major medical mysteries of our time...the cure for diabetes.

Every time you buy anything with "The Mystery Card," *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* will contribute a percentage of the price to the pioneering medical research of the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation.

Diabetes is a metabolic disorder that adversely affects the body's capacity to produce and use insulin, a hormone necessary for the conversion of food into energy. Approximately one out of every twenty Americans suffers from the disease. **And, there is no cure.**

Your use of "The Mystery Card" can help the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation discover the clue to the cure of diabetes!

Mystery

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Take the Mystery Out of Credit Cards

and put "The Mystery Card" in your pocket.

"The Mystery Card" is a MasterCard accepted by six million MasterCard merchants worldwide. There's no mystery about its value.

- **There's no annual fee for one full year!**
- A competitive variable interest rate of prime plus 7.7%.
- 25-day interest-free grace period on purchases when your balance is paid in full each month.
- Instant Cash at ATMs and bank locations throughout the world.
- $250,000 Travel Accident Insurance at no extra cost.

AND

- **Exclusive discounts on mystery books and related merchandise.**

First City MasterCard

Terms and Conditions

Annual Percentage Rate for Purchases	17.7%
Variable Rate Information	Your Annual Percentage Rate may vary. The rate is determined by adding 7.7% to the Prime Rate listed in the "Money Section" of the first *Wall Street Journal* published after the 15th of the month preceding the first day of the billing cycle. As of 8/4/89 the rate as determined by this formula would be 18.7%. Under this offer, a maximum rate of 17.7% is guaranteed through 12/30/89.
Grace Period for Repayment of Balances for Purchases	You have 25 days after the statement date to repay your balance before a finance charge on purchases will be imposed.
Method of Computing the Balance for Purchases	Average Daily Balance (including new transactions) method.
Annual Fees	Membership fee: $20.00 per year. Under this offer, the Annual Fee will be waived the first year. At the beginning of the second year, the Annual Fee will be billed to your account automatically
Minimum Finance Charge	None
Transaction Fee For Purchases	None
	Transaction Fee for Cash Advances: $1.50 **Late Payment Fee**: $15.00 **Over-the-Credit-Limit Fee**: $15.00
The disclosures above are accurate as of the date of printing on 8/4/89. These terms are subject to change after this date. Call First City Bank–Sioux Falls, N.A. at 1-800-641-7878 for any changes in the terms disclosed.	

FIRSTCITY.

First City Bank - Sioux Falls, N.A.

If you would like an application,
please call (800) 641-7878.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* short story by

DONALD OLSON

"I spent hours in the reading room at the British Museum," Phyllis told Roger on the phone, "and I've chatted up Cynthia's friend Terence who works for Sotheby's. None of the items has any intrinsic value to speak of. The posters and all the rest would fetch whatever a collector or circus buff might be willing to pay—certainly no fortune. Terence agreed with you and the police—the man must have been mad to commit murder for any of that trivia."

If regular readers find an element of "The Jumbo Ivories" familiar, that will be explained in an Editorial Comment at the end . . .

THE JUMBO IVORIES

by DONALD OLSON

Three days after Charlotte Fittmont's funeral, her nephew and heir, Roger Pennybank, climbed to the attic of the Old Vicarage, as the house was still called, to begin the task of taking inventory of his aunt's possessions. Dismayed by the almost impenetrable clutter confronting him, he was more than glad to be reprieved by the ringing of the phone in the hall below.

The call was from his wife Phyllis in London, asking if there had been any new developments in the murder investigation.

"Nothing of consequence, darling," Roger reported. "I rang Inspector Grace yesterday. Still no trace of this Hooker chap."

"But you will be back tonight? If I knew which train—"

"Sorry, love. You've no idea what a frightful clutter I must dig through. As long as I'm here, I'd better stay through the weekend. And I want to have a word with that developer chap, the one who was onto me even before Aunt Charlotte was cold."

© 1990 by Donald Olson.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"The vultures already gathering?"

"Just as well, perhaps. The sooner we know what's likely to be realized from this mausoleum, the sooner we can appease our London vultures."

"Which reminds me," said Phyllis, "the bank manager called again about the overdraft. Polite but decidedly frosty."

"Didn't you tell him about Aunt Charlotte?"

"Of course. Instant thaw."

"And what about the list I sent you? Any joy?"

"Not really. I spent hours in the reading room at the British Museum and I've chatted up Cynthia's friend Terence who works for Sotheby's. None of the items has any intrinsic value to speak of. The posters and all the rest would fetch whatever a collector or circus buff might be willing to pay—certainly no fortune. Terence agreed with you and the police—the man must have been mad to commit murder for any of that trivia. It doesn't make sense."

Roger agreed. "If only Aunt Charlotte hadn't taken an instant dislike to Amos Hooker. Had she sold him the stuff, she'd be alive today."

"Poor soul. I feel so guilty now that we didn't get down to see her more often."

"I know. But she didn't exactly encourage visits, even from us. I can't imagine how Hooker wormed his way across the threshold."

After the usual endearments, Roger rang off and returned to the attic, worked until dusk, then bathed and walked down to the local pub for a pint of bitter and a steak-and-kidney pie.

He was hard at it again the following morning when once more he was interrupted, this time by the doorbell.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, Inspector. I was in the attic. Come in."

The Old Vicarage was an ugly, indestructible red-brick example of late Victorian sobriety, now all but engulfed by equally unimaginative if far more livable council-estate houses occupying the western fringe of the Devonshire village of Wibberley Common. Roger led the inspector through the gloomy entrance hall into a long narrow living room Phyllis had once described as representing "the ultimate expression of Victorian high squalor," a forest of fumed oak and black walnut bathed in a greenish light filtered through a jungle of plants in hanging baskets and majolica urns. A sour, musty smell emanated from too much furniture too long undusted in airless

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

semidarkness. The overall effect was of a dated, faded fussiness—one would have guessed immediately that an old woman had lived here alone for a great many years.

Detective-Inspector Grace, whose outwardly diffident manner seemed consciously adopted to lessen the daunting effect of his sheer physical bulk, settled himself gingerly on a creaky, plush-covered gentleman's chair, politely declining Roger's offer of tea or a cold drink.

"Bad news, I'm afraid, sir. We've located Amos Hooker in London. Owns a small shop in Bayswater—antiques, curios. The man has an airtight alibi for the time of your aunt's murder. He was in Yorkshire at an auction. Time fully accounted for."

Blank disappointment swept across Roger's fair, comely face. "I find that hard to believe. It all tied in so neatly. The earlier break-in, the murder. How could it have been a coincidence? Or did he deny breaking in as well?"

"Emphatically. Too emphatically, I should say. The trouble is, we've no proof, only your aunt's suspicions."

Four days before the murder, Roger and his wife, asleep in Pimlico, had been awakened at three in the morning by a phone call from a highly distraught Aunt Charlotte. She had been aroused by a loud noise from downstairs, which she'd assumed to be the cat knocking something over during a midnight prowl, and had got up at once and gone down to investigate. As soon as she switched on the light in the hall, she'd heard the intruder blundering out through the passage to the back door. Before calling Roger, she had rung the local constable, who discovered the back door had been jimmied.

"Well grounded suspicions, I'm sure, Inspector," declared Roger. "Aunt Charlotte was a canny old bird when it came to judging character. She admitted it was a mistake to have let this Hooker chap into the house when he called just a day before the break-in. Seedy-respectable, she called him, all fawning and flattery and beady-eyed avarice—and very importunate in wanting to look over her collection. As she told him, there *was* no collection as such, merely bits and pieces of circus memorabilia that had belonged to her mother, my Great-aunt Constance. Hooker said he was interested in buying everything and offered her twenty pounds on the spot for one item."

Roger opened a cabinet and handed the inspector a framed engraving. "As you can see, it's a wedding invitation, but a rather special one. An invitation to the wedding of Tom Thumb and Lavinia Warren in New York in eighteen sixty-three. As you may recall,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Inspector, Tom and Lavinia were midgets, perhaps the most famous midgets who ever lived, and one of P. T. Barnum's most popular attractions. When Amos Hooker offered her twenty pounds for it, Aunt Charlotte admitted to me she'd been tempted. Such things meant nothing to her—she'd been a dressmaker all her life—but she found Hooker so personally repellent she wanted nothing to do with him. He wasn't at all pleased to be given the bum's rush. Aunt Charlotte was certain it must have been Hooker who broke in the following night and was scared off before he could steal anything."

"She may very well have been right," the inspector agreed, "but he didn't come back again and murder her."

"Couldn't he have hired someone to do it?"

"Bash a sweet old lady's head in for a handful of circus curios? And as you yourself said, sir, everything else in the house wouldn't fetch more than a few hundred pounds at auction."

"True. The only thing my aunt owned of any real value was this house itself—or, rather, the land it stands on. The developers were constantly badgering her to sell."

"As you intend to do, now that it's yours?"

Roger laughed. "It's hardly the cozy sort of place one would care to hold onto as a weekend retreat."

The inspector looked thoughtful. "If a developer was that eager to buy the property and had reason to believe you'd be more amenable to selling than your aunt, that's a possible lead we might follow up. Don't despair, sir. We've no murder weapon and precious few clues, but it's early days yet. We'll get the bugger who did it, you may count on that."

Roger saw the inspector out, then stood for a few moments at the door—beyond which rain had begun to fall steadily out of a swiftly darkening sky, stirred by a rising wind. The rhododendrons made whispery sounds and scraped their long green fingers against the red-brick walls. Roger went back inside, fed the mournfully aloof cat, and fixed himself a drink. The inspector's visit had left him depressed, and eager to finish his work and escape from this dour, brooding house of death, back to Phyllis and the flat in Pimlico and the more cheerful prospect of better days ahead, now that money would soon be available to pay off their debts and move to a bigger flat—perhaps even a small house.

Tired from his exertions, he retired early and was just slipping off to sleep when he was roused by the sound of the doorbell. He

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

flung on his robe and went down to see who it was, wistfully imagining it might be Phyllis, come down from London to surprise him.

"Mr. Pennybank?"

"Yes?"

Draped in a sodden, shabby raincoat that fell almost to his ankles, the man on the doorstep stood no more than a few inches over five feet. Bald and elfin-eared, his uncovered head looked top-heavy on his spindly frame and an absurd tuft of ginger-colored beard mocked a receding chin. Only a pair of brightly inquisitive brown eyes rescued his face from total ugliness. "Do forgive my disturbing you at so late an hour," he said. "My name is Amos Hooker." The voice was surprisingly melodious, a mixture of native Welsh overlaid with a pseudo-Oxford plumminess.

Roger had involuntarily drawn back. "What the devil do you want here?"

"Ah, I see you recognize the name." The unctuous smile did nothing to beautify his features, nor did it betray any trace of affront.

"I know who you are, yes."

"My dear chap, surely the police must have told you they questioned me—and exonerated me of any complicity in your unfortunate relative's demise."

"*They* may be satisfied," Roger snapped. "I'm not."

"Then perhaps you'd do me the courtesy of allowing me to try personally. May I come in for a few minutes?"

Roger would have preferred to slam the door in his face, yet the man's audacity pricked his curiosity. He motioned him inside and switched on the lamp in the living room. Amos Hooker's beetle eyes darted about the room quite as if they'd never before explored its contents. "May I sit down?"

"If you wish."

"Let me extend my sincere condolences, Mr. Pennybank, on your grievous loss—which I can appreciate, having enjoyed the privilege of meeting your aunt."

In view of the little man's displeasing effect on Aunt Charlotte, Roger assumed a satirical undertone in this nonsense.

"And my congratulations," Hooker added, "if you'll not think me disrespectful. I've made inquiries. You, I understand, are the lady's sole heir?"

"If you've come to make an offer on the house, you'll have to join the queue."

Amos Hooker uttered his oddly musical laugh and shook his head.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Not exactly—no, sir. Did not Miss Fittmont mention to you the purpose of my visit to her?"

"She did. And the night after she declined your offer, the house was broken into. Rather a coincidence, wouldn't you agree?"

"Suppose I were to confess to you that I was indeed guilty of that—er—indiscretion."

"Then I'd call the police and you'd be arrested."

"Ah, but I would deny the confession and, with no evidence, I would be released—as of course I was. Not that I was charged, of course. Had I been charged, I might add, you, my dear Mr. Pennybank, would have been out a great deal of money."

"Would I indeed?"

"Oh, decidedly. Suppose I were to tell you that I was less than honest with Miss Fittmont during my visit? That I wasn't the least bit interested in the collection of rubbish she showed me? With the exception of one item."

"The wedding invitation?"

"No, no, that was only a feeler." Hooker cast a wistful glance at the drinks tray and moistened his lips. Roger ignored the hint. "Allow me to tell you a story, Mr. Pennybank, as briefly as possible. Have you ever heard of Jumbo?"

"Jumbo? You mean the elephant, Jumbo?"

Hooker nodded his head. "A very celebrated elephant. The pride of the Royal Zoological Gardens in London. A national treasure, in a sense. In eighteen eighty-one, the American entrepreneur P. T. Barnum succeeded in buying Jumbo from the zoo superintendent for ten thousand dollars, despite a massive public protest which even involved royalty. In September of 'eighty-five, poor Jumbo, after making pots of money for Barnum, was killed by a freight train while walking along the tracks in St. Thomas, Ontario. Barnum had the beast stuffed and mounted. Eventually, the skeleton went to the American Museum of Natural History and the hide to the National History Museum of Tufts University in Massachusetts. But what you don't know—"

Roger started to get up. "What I *do* know, Mr. Hooker, is that it's very late and I'm bloody exhausted. Too exhausted to listen to circus lore."

"Be patient, dear sir," Hooker entreated. "You see, there were certain people in England who deeply resented the sale of Jumbo to Barnum—who were outraged. This group formed a society dedicated to redressing that wrong. Various schemes were considered

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and abandoned as impractical. Then Jumbo was killed. The Society's efforts didn't end there. Oh, no. And this, many will claim, is where lore ends and legend begins. Not so, I assure you.

"You will find no official record of its happening, no written account of where or how or when it was accomplished, but Jumbo's tusks were—appropriated by agents of the Society. They were shipped to Hong Kong and there transformed by skilled artisans into twelve exquisite ivory figurines—the Jumbo Ivories. They were distributed among members of the Society.

"My employer, an immensely wealthy collector, learned of the existence of the Jumbo Ivories ten years ago and engaged me to track them down and acquire them for him. In those ten years, Mr. Pennybank, I've succeeded in acquiring all but one. That one I've managed to trace through various—peregrinations to your aunt, whose mother inherited the remaining ivory, along with other curios, from one of the last surviving members of the Society. Miss Fittmont knew nothing of its value or provenance. To her it was only a curio. Nor did I choose to enlighten her when I might have bought it for a song. Alas, she was most offensive to me and all but ordered me from the house.

"Yes, Mr. Pennybank, perhaps I did attempt to purloin it, and failed. And that is why I'm here now to offer you the same amount of money for that figurine as Mr. Barnum paid the Royal Zoological Gardens for Jumbo—ten thousand American dollars. Tax free."

Roger gazed at the little man with a mixture of emotions. Was he mad? Or could the story actually be true? Hooker had the voice of a con man and the eyes of a conjuror, but would he have risked coming here, risked confessing to the break-in, if he were not impelled by the strongest of motives?

"Sounds insane," Roger murmured. "Utter balderdash."

"My employer may be somewhat eccentric, I grant you—but who can explain the curious passions of the rich? You know the item to which I'm referring? Do we have a deal?"

"You might have bought it for a song, you say, and no doubt have made yourself a fat bonus by swindling my aunt—so why didn't you try the same trick on me?"

Hooker's buttery smile remained impervious to insult. "Risk losing what may be my last chance at the Jumbo Ivory? And let me be frank, dear chap—I didn't murder Miss Fittmont, but I should prefer to avoid attracting the attention of the police to my activities.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I should expect you to hold our agreement in strict confidence. *Think* of it, Mr. Pennybank. Ten thousand, tax free."

Roger *was* thinking of it. Months might elapse before the settlement of Aunt Charlotte's estate. In the meantime—

"It's a tempting offer, Mr. Hooker, if you're serious. I don't suppose you brought the money with you."

"If you agree to my proposal, we can complete the transaction tomorrow night."

A certain irony in the situation tickled Roger's imagination and inspired the shadow of an idea. "Very well. Tomorrow night at nine, shall we say?"

"Splendid. Er—might I have another quick glimpse of the Ivory while I'm here?"

Roger frowned. "You're not sure it's the genuine article?"

"Oh, I've no doubt it is. I made sure it bore the Society's secret mark when I examined it in your aunt's presence. It's still on the mantel in the next room?"

"Yes. But I want to see the money before I show it to you. I still find the whole story somewhat hard to swallow."

"I daresay anyone would, under the circumstances. But not a word to anyone," the little man said. "Agreed?"

Amos Hooker was at the door punctually at nine the following night. Once more, Roger led him into the living room. "You've brought the money?" he asked.

Hooker drew a packet from his inner pocket. "Did you really think I wouldn't?"

Roger unwrapped the packet and counted the money with somewhat unsteady fingers. Until this moment he hadn't dared believe in the reality of such an undreamed-of windfall. He rewrapped the bills and motioned Hooker across the room and into the study, which Aunt Charlotte had used as a sewing room. A bolt of some flowered material still lay on the table alongside the antique Singer.

Roger moved to the fireplace, conscious of treading upon the very spot where his aunt's body had been found by the constable who had broken into the house at the urging of a worried milkman. Poor Aunt Charlotte—had she only known what a treasure had stood within her reach as she'd labored over that sewing machine all those years. He handed the figurine to Hooker, who gazed on it with a mixture of greed and reverence, turning it in his hands.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Then he frowned. "It's been chipped, I see, along the base. I didn't notice that on my earlier visit."

Roger saw all those lovely green bills flying away like so many frightened birds. "You mean that would affect its value?"

Hooker laughed. "By no means. Dear me, you can't imagine what a thrill this is for me. The last of the Jumbo Ivories. My employer will be overjoyed."

Roger reached for the figurine. "I'll wrap it for you. Fix yourself a drink, why don't you? And one for me. This deserves a toast, wouldn't you agree?"

He watched as Amos Hooker crossed to the table by the window where earlier in the day Roger had arranged the tray of bottles. Then he moved silently forward and, as Hooker bent over the tray, Roger raised the figurine and brought it down smartly across the base of the little man's scrawny neck. Without a sound, Hooker pitched forward across the table, then slid to the floor.

Roger made sure he was dead. Then he placed the figurine on the sewing table, tidied the drinks tray, and rearranged the body before walking into the other room and picking up the phone.

"Inspector Grace, please?"

The crime squad had done its work and departed. Suitably encased, Amos Hooker's body had been wheeled away. There remained only Roger and the inspector, whose assistant, Detective-Sergeant Millvane, had been dispatched upon some errand back to the station.

"One can only assume, Inspector," Roger ventured to surmise, "that Hooker believed the house to be empty. I don't suppose we'll ever know what he was really looking for. Perhaps he thought my aunt had money or jewelry hidden away. Such stories do get around in a small village. Big house, reclusive spinster."

The inspector nodded. "You say he spun around when you surprised him by turning on the light. He snatched up this pair of shears from the sewing table and was on the point of attacking you."

"Exactly. I was terrified. You should have seen the look in his eyes. The man was clearly insane. My first thought was to grab the poker by the fireplace, but then the figurine caught my eye. I reached for it, and when Hooker lunged at me I sidestepped and cracked him over the head. I'd hoped to stun him, knock him out—I certainly never meant to kill the poor sod. I called you the moment I realized he was dead."

"Very proper, sir." Catching a signal from his sergeant, who now

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

appeared in the doorway, the inspector excused himself and the two men conferred in the next room. When they presently rejoined Roger, the inspector was studying what appeared to be a glossy photograph.

"One other point, Mr. Pennybank, just to satisfy my curiosity. This figurine, now. So far as you know, has it always stood there on the mantelpiece?"

"As far back as I can remember," said Roger without hesitation.

"Hmm—yes." The inspector handed Roger the photograph. "This was one of the shots taken by the scene-of-crime lads the night of Miss Fittmont's murder. As you can see, the figurine is not on the mantel, nor does it appear in any of the other shots taken of this room. How would you explain that discrepancy?"

Roger contrived a look of baffled innocence. "I really can't explain it, Inspector. All I know is that it was there when I needed it."

"As it was there when you needed it the night your aunt was killed?"

"Oh, I say, Inspector—"

"I would suggest you say nothing, sir, before consulting your solicitor. You see, there is one other small detail that we did not make public. Our lads in Forensic are also very thorough. When the post-mortem was done on Miss Fittmont, the medical officer came up with a tiny chip which when analyzed was found not to be a bone fragment from the skull but a fragment of ivory. As you know, the murder weapon has not been found—until now, I venture to say.

"I'd be willing to wager a shilling or two that that chip of ivory came from the figurine. We weren't too concerned with your failure to account precisely for your whereabouts the night of the murder as we were inclined to believe the break-in and subsequent murder were related. Perhaps the break-in is what planted in your head the idea of killing your aunt? In any event, I think you'd better come down to the station with us now, sir, and see if we can't clear up this little matter. Sergeant, bring along the figurine."

As Sergeant Millvane reached for the figurine, it nearly slipped from his grasp.

Roger smiled. "Do be careful, Sergeant. That happens to be a very valuable piece. Tell me, Inspector, have you ever heard of the Jumbo Ivories?"

"Can't say that I have, sir."

Roger breathed a wistful sigh of regret. "I rather wish I could say the same."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Editorial Comment

Several days before receiving this story from Donald Olson's agent, we received a letter from Donald telling us that after mailing a new story to her that day, he picked up the mail, which contained the August (1989) issue: "I glanced at the first story, then read it, and admired it, but my first reaction was, Oh, no! That story was Edward D. Hoch's 'The Circus Murders,' and the story I just mailed out is called 'The Jumbo Ivories.' I couldn't believe it. Surely the odds must be very long indeed that two writers, aiming stories at the same magazine, should come up with ideas inspired by the same somewhat obscure historical event at more or less the same time.

"You may decide that two stories about Jumbo are one too many, although they are totally dissimilar in every respect, Jumbo being incidental to the plot of mine. Edward Hoch and I must have done some of the same reading, although the idea for my story came originally from an eighty-nine-year-old friend of my sister-in-law's who happened to show me, very proudly, a small ivory figurine (much smaller than the one in my story) which had been given to her many years ago by a lady she met and made friends with at Chautauqua. This lady was a member of the Ringling family. Greta (my sister-in-law's friend) had evidently been given to understand, or somehow acquired the notion, that this was one of several little figurines made from Jumbo's tusks. This seemed to me unlikely, as the Ringlings came on the scene much later and had nothing whatsoever to do with Barnum's Jumbo. Could be these pieces were made from the tusks of one of Ringling's own elephants. In any event, it gave me the idea for a story and I read up on Jumbo. I wanted my plot to have some degree of credibility and I wanted to find out if there was any chance Jumbo's tusks *might* have been fashioned into ivory artifacts.

"I knew that Barnum had had the mounted hide of Jumbo sent to the Natural History Museum at Tufts University. The University Archivist at Tufts replied to my inquiry with the information that Jumbo—tusks intact—remained at Tufts until 1975 when a fire in Barnum Hall resulted in his destruction. I might have used this fact, although I didn't, to suggest a bizarre possibility to my plot. Could the Society have been responsible for the fire?

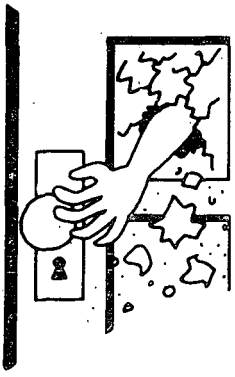
"Jumbo, incidentally, as you may know, is the name of Tufts' athletic teams and Jumbo is still the mascot of the university.

"Don't you find all this a rather uncanny coincidence?"

We do—and more than that, we find the background, and the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

detective work, fascinating. And while the saying is that *elephants* never forget, it seems only right that an elephant as noble as Jumbo should not be forgotten. We're delighted he has figured in two such fine stories in these pages only seven months apart.



DETECTIVERSE

SMALL DILEMMA

by NOMA LANDRY

Stealthy footsteps on the stair,
Door unguarded, all asleep—
Gathering dust are treasures there.
Down the hallway footsteps creep.

Burgle-bag now holds its fill—
Satisfaction, all's in order.
Footsteps padding, small voice shrills,
"Mister, gimme a drink of water!"

© 1990 by Noma Landry.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A CONTEST—TO CELEBRATE OUR 49th YEAR

In 1978, "Mrs. Arnold," by the versatile Berton Roueché, was published in *Family Circle*. Mr. Roueché has kindly given us permission to reprint the story here and to offer readers an opportunity to rewrite his ending—that is, the final paragraph or two of his story only. Your ending can be either light or dark, but it should be well written and credible, and anywhere from three words to two hundred, divided into as many paragraphs as you think most effective.

There will be two prizes awarded of $49.00 each for the best two submissions. Only one entry will be allowed per person and no employee of Davis Publications may enter. Enclose a stamped self-addressed envelope for the return of your entry and the announcement of the contest results. It is possible that no award or only one award will be made if the editors judge the endings received insufficiently satisfying. The deadline is March 15, 1990, and the results of the contest will be announced in the November issue.

Good luck—and, whether you rewrite the ending or not, enjoy the story!

MRS. ARNOLD

by BERTON ROUECHÉ

"It was Maxwell House," Earl said. "The little two-ounce jar."

"You're sure?" I said. "We can't take any chances."

"About the coffee?" he said. "Positively."

"About everything," I said.

"Everything except maybe the jelly. Like I said—I'm pretty sure it was Smucker's, and I *think* it was grape. It looked like grape. But I can't guarantee it. You know where the jelly is, Mr. Weaver. That's pretty far from the peephole."

"All right," I said. "I guess we're okay. And thanks, Earl. You did a good job."

© 1978 by Berton Roueché.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I went back up the aisle to the front of the store. The rest was up to me.

There were lines at all five checkouts. She was in Number Three with two older women ahead of her. She had a full cart and her pocketbook was there on top. It was a big square, red-leather bag with a black handle. I walked down and around and stood behind the Number Three packer and waited. I could feel my heart beating and I took a breath to slow it down. I hoped to God she wouldn't make a scene.

"Excuse me, Mrs. Arnold," I said.

"What?" she said. "Oh—hello, Mr. Weaver."

"I wonder if I could speak to you a minute?" I said.

"What?"

"I'd like to speak to you a minute."

"What do you mean?"

"I think it might be better if we went into my office," I said.

"Really, Mr. Weaver," she objected. "I'm afraid I don't—I mean, I'm really in a terrible hurry. My oldest girl—"

"You can leave your cart here," I told her. "The boy will keep an eye on your things. Chris?"

"Sure," Chris said.

"Well—" She gave a little shrug. "But I'm really—"

"Please bring your pocketbook with you," I told her.

She turned back and picked up her pocketbook. She seemed to sag. I let her pass and then followed her along into the office and closed the door. She sat down on the chair at the end of the desk with her pocketbook on her lap. I sat down behind the desk and cleared my throat.

"I'm sorry to have to say this, Mrs. Arnold," I said.

She raised her head and looked at me. She looked sick. She looked like death. She looked eighty years old.

"I know," she said.

"Yes," I said. "But I have reason to believe that you have certain items from this store in your pocketbook. Items that you neglected to pay for."

"I know," she said again.

"Items that, in fact, you stole."

"I know."

"Now, then," I said. "Now, let's see. I believe you have in your bag a small jar of Maxwell House instant coffee. And a bar of Dove soap.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And a small package of Philadelphia cream cheese. And a tin of Underwood's deviled ham. Am I right?"

She nodded. "I guess so. I don't know. I'm so—"

"Oh, yes, and a jar of jelly."

She sat hunched in her chair.

"May I have them, please?" I said.

"What?"

"Let me have them."

"Oh." She opened her pocketbook. She took out a bar of soap and put it on the desk. And a jar of Maxwell House instant coffee. And the deviled ham and the cream cheese—and the jelly. The jelly was Smucker's crabapple jelly.

I sat for a moment and looked at her. "I don't understand you, Mrs. Arnold," I said. "I just don't get it."

"I know," she said. She looked down at the floor. "It's—I can't explain it. Something just came over me. It seems like a—I don't know. A dream."

"I wish I could believe you," I said. "I wish it were true—that that's the way it was. That it was just a crazy impulse. That it just happened. But the fact is, Mrs. Arnold, you've been stealing from this store for a long, long time."

She didn't say anything.

I said, "Isn't that right?"

"No." She raised her head. "I mean—yes. Oh, Mr. Weaver, I'm so—"

"All right," I said. "And I'm sorry, too. So now I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm not going to tell the police. This is too small a town for that. Neither of us wants that kind of trouble. It isn't necessary."

"Thank you," she said.

"What I'm going to do is this," I told her. "I'm simply going to bar you from the store. I don't ever want to see you in this store again."

She sat up straight. "No! Oh, my God, Mr. Weaver—no! You can't do that!"

"I'm afraid I have to."

"Mr. Weaver," she said, "I *promise* you. I promise I'll never—I give you my word."

"I don't have any choice," I said.

"Please," she said. "I swear I'll—please, Mr. Weaver. I have to come here. What could I tell my husband? What could I say? I can't afford to trade at Lester's Market. I have to trade here."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"What about the A&P?" I asked.

She didn't say anything.

"I'll answer that question for you. You can't trade at the A&P. You were barred from there last summer. Isn't that right?"

She stared at me.

"I said I didn't understand you," I said. "And I don't."

"I know. I know—but, please, Mr. Weaver. My husband would kill me. He'd *kill* me!" She began to cry.

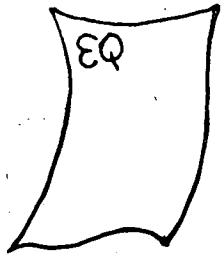
"I'm sorry," I said. "I really am. But—"

"All I ask is one more chance," she begged. "Just give me one chance—I'll prove it to you."

"I wish I could believe you," I told her.

"You can," she said. "You *can!*" The tears were running down her cheeks. Her eyes looked enormous. "Oh, Mr. Weaver—"

As she reached across the desk and grabbed my hand, her pocketbook slid off her lap. It hit the floor and opened, spilling a billfold, a cigarette lighter, and a pair of glasses. Something else rolled under the desk. I felt and found it and picked it up. It was an avocado.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* short story by

ERNEST SAVAGE

Inside the store, Lenz could be the cop that he was, at least for now, but outside he could just stand there lost, a greenhorn. Hackett said, pointing, "That's Jeffrey pine there." His hand moved. "Lodgepole pine, and next to it, the skinny one, a red fir. We're at sixty-two hundred feet and that's what you'll see mostly. Some aspen, maybe, and a silver pine or two. Plus the undergrowth, the chaparral."

"Dense," Lenz said dimly.

"Animal trails through it, comrade—we won't have to cut our way. And look—over there. That's where Fremont rammed his car through. Let's saddle up, hombre."

Hombre, comrade. Lenz hoped there wouldn't be much of that . . .

A HELL OF A COUPLE OF DAYS

by ERNEST SAVAGE

On Monday, Harold Fremont killed Helen Holmes in her cabin about a quarter mile west of Cody City. Holmes lived alone, with no near neighbors, and Fremont hadn't hurried at his work. The result was not pleasing to the eye.

Two days later, Inspector Tom Lenz, up from San Francisco, glanced at a coroner's picture of the victim, and glanced away. Bill Hackett, for ten minutes now a Cody County deputy sheriff at a dollar a day, picked it up and studied it. The woman's eyes were puffed shut under livid purple bruises; there was a deep knife slash across her left cheek and three puncture wounds in the mound of

© 1990 by Ernest Savage.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

her left breast. Hackett flipped the picture back down on Sheriff Sam Wilson's desk.

"His seventh victim, Bill," Wilson said. "But his first here."

By "here," he meant Cody County, all nine hundred and seventy thousand mountainous acres of it. He sounded aggrieved—this was *his* county, and this sort of thing just didn't happen here. But it was Hackett's county, too, his home, and the dead woman could have easily been his wife. He was far more than merely aggrieved.

Lenz had arrived at the Sheriff's office in Cody City at noon that Wednesday, having left San Francisco by car at five A.M. At two-thirty that afternoon, Wilson had introduced him to Hackett and then sworn Hackett into the service of the law.

"I'll do it for nothing," Hackett had said, but Wilson wanted no part of that.

"No," he'd said sternly. "I know the county's broke, but we'll have no vigilantes here, Bill. You're workin' for me now, you're workin' for the *law,* and you'll work by the *rules* of the law. You got that?"

"For a buck a day, Sam?" Hackett grinned. "You want him caught, or just what?"

"I want him brought back alive."

Fremont had killed six women before he killed Helen Holmes. Four years ago he'd been caught, tried, and jailed for life without the possibility of parole. But ten days ago he'd escaped. His six earlier victims had all lived around the San Francisco Bay area, but there was no question that he'd killed Holmes. His trademarks were the slashed left cheek and the punctured left breast, plus other specific carnal damage not known to the public at large.

Lenz had brought with him a mass of data on the man, transcripts of his interrogations, his trial, and his three appeals—about a million bucks' worth of paper, was Hackett's sour comment. But among it all was an item that had prompted Wilson to ask his help: Fremont had once spent a summer in a one-man encampment high in the mountains that made up most of Cody County. And since he'd now killed a woman who lived just outside Cody City, the assumption was that he was headed that way.

Wilson had a USGS map spread out on his desk. With a pencil he'd circled maybe forty thousand acres of the county's roughest terrain. "We think his camp's somewhere in there," he said and looked up into Hackett's wry grin. "You've fished and hunted that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

country, Bill. You brought that girl back down from there a couple of years ago. I'd suggest you start at Hill's Station—"

"Lila," Hackett said to his wife, "I'd like you to meet Inspector Tom Lenz of the San Francisco police."

"I take it you're going, then," she said.

"Yes. Tomorrow morning early."

Mrs. Hackett sighed, then smiled. "Welcome," she said to Lenz.

Her heavy studio easel had been set up in the front yard of their spacious homesite. A 24 × 30″ canvas on the easel was nearly covered with broad colorful slashes of paint. Lenz, much impressed by her and her work, much surprised by all this, said, "Gosh, Mrs. Hackett, that's really good."

He meant it, and Hackett smiled. "She exhibits," he said. "She sells."

"I don't wonder," Lenz said.

Long ago, the broad, deep yard of the Hackett place had been bulldozed nearly flat. Paths of the hard red mountain soil had been laid out through rock-edged garden areas that some sure hand had nurtured into bounteous fall bloom. Lenz had the sense of "showplace"—most new people did. But the pattern of paths allowed Mrs. Hackett to motor her chair to a variety of points with a selection of views. On fine days, as this one had been, she'd have Hackett set up the easel at a chosen spot and then send him away.

Nobody in Cody City knew why Lila Hackett was a paraplegic—and if Hackett had his way, nobody ever would. Ten years ago—when they'd moved here from Long Beach—the stunning log-cabin home they lived in had been prefabricated in Oregon and at their order reassembled here. Now it looked like a natural growth of the rugged land, how Nature had meant men to live. City-man Lenz was awed—and troubled. He'd been told a mountain man would join him here for the hunt. But nothing had prepared him for Hackett. Or for Hackett's home and Hackett's wife. But Lenz had liked her at once, taking the edge off his growing dislike of Hackett himself.

"So," Mrs. Hackett said, "I guess I'll have to get Elsie for a few days."

"I'll call her," Hackett said.

"Yes, please do, Bill," she said. "And now you men'll want a drink, won't you?" Her smile bloomed again. "And so will I."

She pressed buttons in the control panel of her chair and it began to move. Hackett, a big strong puppy dog around his wife, picked

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

up the easel in one hand, the paint box and palette in the other, and followed her. Lenz, following him, thought, I should've stayed in a motel tonight.

Hackett led him to a room at the back of the sprawling place and said, "What you do, Tom, is you don't put this down on your expense account, this room. Save San Francisco forty bucks, which is what the Cody City motel charges for a night."

He was serious. Lenz, watching his face, saw no amiable grin there, like I'm kidding, right? "Of course," he said.

Hackett pointed at Lenz's valapac and asked bluntly, no puppy dog now, "You bring boots?"

"Yes."

"Good. I've killed rattlers at nine thousand feet in these hills. You been in the mountains before?"

"Well—no, not really." Lenz was uncomfortable in this big luxurious room, and with this big confusing man. "Not where we're probably gonna have to go."

"I'd guess no higher'n seventy-five hundred feet," Hackett said. "Somewhere within the timberline." He watched Lenz sip from his gin and tonic, which didn't seem like a cop drink to him. In fact, the short and slender Lenz didn't *look* much like a cop to him. And the way he'd turned away from that picture— "You bring a rifle?"

"No."

"No?"

"No. Just a handgun. I don't plan to kill him, Bill."

"What if he plans to kill you?"

"Well, I've got you to protect me, don't I?"

Hackett laughed. He liked that, the little man was feisty. But he couldn't see him in a manhunt. He said, "How come they sent you on this deal, Tom?"

"I was on 'this deal' before," Lenz said. "I brought him in."

"*You?*"

"Yeah, me."

"You *alone?*"

"I had backup, but I made the arrest."

"Was Fremont armed?"

"He had an Army-issue .45 automatic, fully loaded."

"How come you didn't shoot him?"

"They've got to shoot first, Hackett."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Oh, Christ!" Hackett said, years of angry frustration in his voice. "You shoot him, Lenz, you save the state a couple of million bucks."

"That's not the way it works."

"That's the way it *oughta* work, man!" Hackett was glowering. "You know what?"

"What?"

"All the libraries in Cody County are closed. All the libraries in a lot of Northern California counties are closed. You know why?"

Lenz sighed. He knew why, but didn't say so. He waited.

"On accounta the criminal-justice system in this state," Hackett said, red showing in the baggy flesh around his eyes. "On accounta one damn continuance after another, followed by a change of venue or some such thing. On account of a half dozen psychiatrists having a long leisurely look at some son of a bitch that got caught with the bloody knife in his hand. At five hundred bucks a day. A series of court-appointed lawyers—the guy doesn't like the color of one shyster's eyes, he gets another. Three years later he goes to trial and gets convicted, but lawyer number ten appeals. Why not? It's a fat living, right? Shuffle the papers for another six months or so, collect those heavy county checks. Finally the guy goes to jail, at a cost of forty thousand a year, until they turn him loose to do it all over again. Crooks and lawyers are eating us up like cake, Lenz. The tail is wagging the dog in this poor worn-out state!"

Lenz sighed again. He'd heard all this before. He said, "You got a way with metaphors, Bill."

"Me!" Hackett said. "*Me* doing a job we can't afford to hire a pro to do. Three-quarters of this county hasn't seen a cop in months. Wilson should have twenty men to work with, but what's he got? Seven!"

"Plus you now."

"Yeah, plus me."

"He said you volunteered."

"Hell, I'd work for him all year if he'd let me. For free."

Lenz drank from his glass, wondering if Hackett was ever this mouthy, this *macho,* in front of his wife. She was at this moment preparing a meal—in a kitchen, Lenz had noted, designed for a woman in a wheelchair. The whole house, it seemed to him, had been made for her, her compromised life. But her work was everywhere in the place, four vibrant oils on the walls of this room alone. He looked at one hanging behind Hackett's back, and liked it, even coveted it. She was a strong painter—strong primary colors laid on

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with a knife—but pictures in there, too: sky, rocks, mountains, trees, people. Maybe she tamed Hackett, just her presence. But Lenz lacked that kind of power and always had. He was nearing the end of his rope now and knowing it, feeling it. He should've taken a motel room—to rest, to get himself together.

Hackett, watching him, and maybe sensing his distress, said, "Let's go get another drink."

They got to Hill's Station at two-thirty on the cool clear Thursday afternoon. Hackett, at the wheel of his Bronco, pulled up to the front of Wiley Crawford's store and shut off the engine. "Road ends here," he said. "From now on we walk."

"That was a road?" Lenz's butt was sore from the last fifteen miles of bouncing over potholed gravel. He got out and stretched. He'd slept badly in his free room.

"This place should be a historical monument," Hackett said. He looked around as though surveying something he owned and was proud of. "Guy named Hill established it a hundred and twenty years ago or so. Some dreamers thought they could run a stagecoach route through the Sierra here, but they didn't even get this far with it." He shook his head—he liked the story: "Hill built it and lived in it until he died at age a hundred and three. Lived off the land. Ate berries, rabbits, deer, bear, even grizzlies then, fish—whatever he could kill or scrounge. Died in nineteen thirty-two, and when they found him they buried his bones out behind, nailed a couple of hunks of wood together for a cross. Now Wiley Crawford runs the place."

"A hundred and three years old, huh?" Lenz could hardly believe it. He himself was thirty-three and could hardly believe even that. He couldn't imagine seventy years to go.

"Well," Wiley Crawford said, "look who's here!" He met them at the door, a bearded, big-bellied man who liked to hug people in greeting. He hugged Hackett and Lenz backed away a pace. Hackett introduced them and Lenz got away with a handshake. Then the three men moved to a long wooden counter that stretched across the rear of the place. A strong but not unpleasant odor saturated the air. Age, Lenz thought: old wood, old stuff for sale, an old man. Lenz, the bona fide working cop, laid a picture of Fremont on the counter. "You ever see this man, Mr. Crawford?"

"Yup," Crawford said. "Twice. First time about five years ago, second time day before yesterday. Man about your size," he added—gratuitously, Lenz thought.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Did he walk in or drive?" Lenz asked.

"Drove. He had one of them small Ford cars, an Escort."

Lenz and Hackett exchanged a glance. Before coming up that morning, they'd evaluated the possibilities with Sheriff Wilson, what wheels Fremont might have, and what arms. From stolen-car reports along Fremont's trail from Sacramento to Cody City, they'd picked out four likelies, the Escort among them.

"Was it blue?" Hackett asked.

"Yup."

"Where is it now, Wiley, do you know?"

"Man drove it off through the woods—east." Wiley shook his head. "Couldn'ta got far."

"Did you go look for it?"

"No, Bill. None of my business."

Crawford didn't like cars—they stunk up the air, he'd often said. He used a mule team and a Conestoga wagon—from Hill's days—to go down and get his supplies. Here, he used Coleman lanterns for light and a wood stove for heat. The beer he drank a lot of but sold when asked was cooled in a stream out back near Hill's grave. Hackett admired him but had never really plumbed the reasons why.

"What'd he buy?" he asked.

"Four packs of cigarettes, a pound of beef jerky, a bottle of freeze-dried coffee, and two cans of Sterno. That was all."

"He's a coffee-drinker," Lenz said after a moment, and Hackett looked at him. "I mean," Lenz said, "he's a coffee-drinker the way some guys take dope. Like he couldn't live without it." He asked Wiley, "How big a bottle of freeze-dried?"

"A small, the smallest I got."

"He was here five years ago, you said. What'd he buy then?"

"Some of everything in the store. Biggest order I ever filled—that's why I remembered him. Six weeks' worth of stuff, anyway."

Hackett said to Lenz, "Does that jibe with your records—five years ago?"

"Close enough."

"Had he killed anyone before then?"

"He's a *killer?*" Crawford asked.

"He's a killer, Wiley, but only of young pretty girls. You're safe."

"He'd killed two before then," Lenz said. "The rest came later."

"So maybe a couple of days' worth of stuff he bought this time," Hackett said. "Whereas five years ago he bought six weeks' worth.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What do you suppose that means?" He turned to Crawford. "Five years ago, was he on wheels or on foot?"

"Foot. He backpacked the stuff out, made two trips."

"Oh?" Lenz said. "How long in between?"

"Day and a half, if I remember. He's a killer? Really? He didn't look like one any more'n you do."

"Well, he is," Lenz said. "Seven times now—what we call the serial type. How did he look two days ago?"

"Tired," Crawford said.

"Did he do any talking?"

"No. Just told me what he wanted, paid for it, 'n took off."

"What was he wearing?"

"A white T-shirt, a lightweight yellow windbreaker, jeans, 'n boots."

"A hat?" Hackett asked.

"No."

"Any sign of a gun or a knife?"

"No. Not that I saw. He kills *girls?*"

"That's what he does," Hackett said.

"Oldest one was thirty-five," Lenz said, thinking of years again—of time, what to do with it. He didn't want to do much more of what he was doing now.

Hackett bought some odds and ends from Crawford's stock, but just to leave a few bucks behind. Everything they needed for five days was in two backpacks in the Bronco. They would live partly off the land, but Hackett hadn't told Lenz that yet.

Inside the store, Lenz could be the cop that he was, at least for now, but outside he could just stand there lost, a greenhorn. Hackett said, pointing, "That's a Jeffrey pine there." His hand moved. "Lodgepole pine, and next to it, the skinny one, a red fir. We're at sixty-two hundred feet and that's what you'll see mostly. Some aspen, maybe, and a silver pine or two. Plus the undergrowth, the chaparral."

"Dense," Lenz said dimly.

"Animal trails through it, comrade—we won't have to cut our way. And look—over there. That's where Fremont rammed his car through. Let's saddle up, hombre."

Hombre, comrade. Lenz hoped there wouldn't be much of that.

The Escort was about a quarter mile from Crawford's store, its front wheels suspended between the lower branches of a Sierra jun-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

iper and a short outcrop of rock. Fremont had just punched it in there and left it, the two doors wide open. Nothing in the front, two comic books on the floor in the rear. Lenz, the city cop again, picked them up and said, "Mama comes out of the Safeway with her kid and says, 'My God, the car's gone!' The kid—with his priorities straight—says, 'Mama, they took my comic books!' "

Hackett grinned. "You think that's the way it was?"

"Fremont's illiterate. Or anyway, he's got dyslexia."

"Gee whiz," Hackett said. "Dyslexia and this terrible lifelong addiction to caffeine. Some shrink shoulda got him off on that alone." Hackett was looking down at the shelf of rock, a cigarette ground out there under Fremont's boot. "Well, I'll give him one point," he said, "he didn't want to set the state on fire."

"You're generous," Lenz said. "So where'd he go from here?"

"A Maidu, an Ishi, could sniff the air and tell you. But there're only two places he could go from here—logically, anyway. You nest in this country for weeks, as he once did, you nest near water. And you carry as much stuff as he did out of Crawford's store, you don't walk to Nevada. Remember those two trips he had to make, a day and a half apart. He's within seven or eight miles of us right now—one of two places, like I said."

"Pick one," Lenz said. With five days of living hanging on his back, he couldn't imagine Fremont, no bigger than he was, carrying six weeks' worth, even in two trips. "The *right* one, please."

Hackett moved, began to climb, picking out an invisible trail, head down, watching where he went. Lenz, his shoulders already sore, followed like a lamb.

They came out at a point that allowed them their first real view of the Sierra since leaving Cody City. Lenz wasn't too weary to appreciate it and whispered, "My God!"

Hackett, silent for a moment, let the vastness of the scene seep into him like fresh air in the lungs. It's why he loved the mountains, these views that seemed to erase the accumulated years of human abuse. But he'd seen, in a crack in the rock at his feet, another cigarette, stuck there like a sign. He reached down and picked it up. "Barely took a puff or two," he said, "and then set it there, just so. He's leaving a trail, Tom, that he wants us to follow."

"Why? To lead us into an ambush?" Lenz felt suddenly exposed, standing there on the ledge of rock. A canyon, deep and wide enough to turn its trapped air blue, almost like clear water, was at their feet. Shoot us in the back and kick our bodies over the edge—the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

picture in his mind was like an unrolling tape and he whirled in his tracks.

"No," Hackett said. "He'll have gone north from here, along the rim. He's not behind us, he's ahead. Relax, and let's go."

It was five-thirty and the sun, settling rapidly in the west, had risen from the crests of the distant hills. And a scant month before the first snows would decorate this vista, it was cold. "About two miles north of here," Hackett said, "the canyon comes to an abrupt end. We can cross over there and work our way back—south and east. I know where he is, Tom. This time tomorrow, he's ours."

Or vice versa, Lenz thought, dumbly following along, now like a mule on a rope, not a lamb.

Hackett had boiled a dozen hotdogs last night at home, and took four out of his pack. Then he opened a can of baked beans and emptied it into a fireless cooking pan he'd brought along—your compleat outdoorsman. He'd already set up a battery-operated lamp that cast a pale glow downward, like a path light in a garden.

To Lenz, sore, tired, and cold, it was an eerie scene. Some horror-film creature could at any moment ooze around the tree at his back. He could feel its presence, *some* presence, out there. He'd never spent a night other than in a bed. In a room. With a door. He'd laid out his sleeping bag on pine boughs, as instructed by Hackett. Now he sat on it, feeling every lump in the ancient soil beneath. Watching Hackett, bent over his work, he said, "You told me that Old Man Hill used to shoot and eat grizzly bears. Are there any left?"

Hackett chuckled. "No."

"Well, what else lives around here, then?" Lenz tried to make it sound like idle conversation, but failed. "Whose domain are we uninvited guests in?"

Now Hackett laughed and looked up, his face a ghostly blur in the dim light. He said, "Black bears, mountain lions, porcupines, coyotes—and, of course, the dreaded Sierra jumping mouse."

"The what?"

"Relax, for crissakes. You'll sleep like a baby and rise up fresh with the morning sun. Sniff that air!"

"Yeah—but what else is sniffing the same air?"

Hackett laughed again and tasted the beans.

Lenz heard sounds all night. Four times he heard Hackett's snore crescendo and then stop abruptly as apnea struck, waking the man

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

up. But identifiable sounds, almost welcome. He heard the hoot of several owls, more identifiable sounds. He heard whirring sounds, probably owls again, but the sharp snapping of twigs could be anything. Now and again he slept, startled and angry with himself for dropping his guard. His service .38 was within quick and easy reach at his side. He yearned for the city, and was up and dressed long before dawn, long before Hackett wakened.

He wasn't sure that he heard the lion, or if some instinct told him it was there. Instinct or not, his breath stopped in his throat, his heart a sudden clatter in his chest. The lion was about forty feet away, upwind in a gentle dawn breeze. Lenz began to breathe again and took up the .38. The lion was broadside to him, motionless on a flat rock, looking up the length of the canyon they'd traveled along yesterday afternoon and evening.

An almost clear shot, if he could hold his hands still. The size of the thing! The length of that twitching tail! Lenz inched a little to his left, got the lower branch of a manzanita out of the line of fire, and two-fisted the gun. He took a deep breath and held it, and then Hackett's big right hand dropped down hard on his wrists and squeezed them in a powerful grip. Hackett said nothing, but his eyes were aflame. He ripped the gun from Lenz's hands and made as if to throw it away—but instead dropped it on Lenz's bedroll in a gesture of contempt. A big hairy man, in his underwear in the freezing air, he towered menacingly over the still-prone city cop.

"You'd shoot that animal," he growled, "you'd *bushwhack* that gorgeous creature, for Christ's sake, but you wouldn't shoot a guy who'd slaughtered seven women!"

Lenz let his head drop on a folded arm. He'd never felt as drained in his life. Would he have? Was he about to squeeze the trigger, that cat's head in his sights? Probably he would have. He hadn't been thinking, he'd been reacting to a clear and present danger. There was nothing in the cop Code of Conduct about mountain cats. Only about men—perps. Perpetrators: what a dumb word.

He rolled over on his back and looked up at a fragmented sky, still richly blue in the early-morning light. "Anyway," he said, "I'm about through. Maybe another six months of this crap."

Hackett said nothing. He was pulling on his jeans, tucking in the tails of his shirt.

"About six months from now," Lenz said, "I take the bar exam." He didn't expect an answer from Hackett, and didn't wait for one.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I've been studying law for five years, and I'm good at it. I eat it up, I get straight A's."

He sat up and wrapped his arms around his knees. "The thing is, a cop's in court a lot, on the stand, being questioned." He shook his head. "Half the time by guys who shouldn't have made it out of high school. You think: I'm better than this guy, I should be making his kind of dough. An easy life, Hackett—nobody wanting to shoot you in the back." He looked up at the big angry man. "Yeah," he said, "I'da probably shot your cat, but I was scared. How'd I know what the goddamn thing had in mind?"

"What'd they do," Hackett almost snarled, "send you up here as punishment?"

"What do you mean?"

"What do most cops think about most lawyers?"

"Well—"

"They hate their guts, don't they? Do your guys know you're about to join the enemy forces?"

"You mean take the bar exam?"

"That's what I mean."

"Of course they do—you can't keep that kind of a secret for five years. But I was a good cop, Hackett. I *am* a good cop. The thing is—" His teeth began to chatter in the cold air and from accumulated fatigue. He clamped his jaws shut, but his shoulders and arms began to shake and twitch. He closed his eyes and said to himself, Okay, stop this now, and it worked. He opened his eyes and looked up at Hackett. "The thing is," he said, "I'm a quarter of an inch taller than the minimum cop height. Most cops are big burly sons-a-bitches like you. You get tired of it."

He relaxed his arms and felt better. He'd sloughed something off, a bigger load than he knew. "You begin to think cop quality comes by the pound, you begin to *believe* it." He got himself together and stood up, nearly a half foot shorter than the other man, still glowering at him. "But it doesn't," he said.

So he'd seen his first mountain cat and had his first bout of wildlife terror. So what? He no longer seemed to care. Fatigue had led to indifference. Which can lead to apathy, which can lead to coma, which can lead to—he knew the sequence. He drank a cup of Hackett's fresh-made coffee. Then made himself drink another and eat a cold hotdog. If he had a reserve tank in him somewhere, he'd have to spark it into life . . .

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They found another cigarette on the far side of the big flat rock the cat had posed himself on. It was unsmoked, laid out like an arrow.

Hackett, hunkered down, said, "There are three kinds of rock in these mountains, Lenz—granitic, volcanic, and sedimentary. This chunk's sedimentary, rare at this elevation. Fifty million years ago a sea bed—imagine that."

He was trying to get past the day's bad beginning, and Lenz knew it but couldn't think of a damn thing to say. He felt a seductive wave of languor sweep him—he could have slept on his feet.

Hackett stood up and pointed south and east. "He's over there somewhere. Maybe not far. That's a broad, fairly flat ridge that projects itself seven–eight miles south, cut by a couple of ravines. If you wanna hide out in these hills, that's not a bad place to do it."

Lenz finally spoke. "You said he wanted to be found."

"And *you* said that maybe he wanted to trap us." Hackett grinned at the shorter man. "Let's go find out which."

They ate lunch at high noon—sardines and apples, and candy bars for dessert. Lenz had fully wakened, had found his reserve, but not much of his tongue yet. He'd spent most of the morning, oddly, thinking about Mrs. Hackett's paintings, how a certain one would look just right on his living-room wall at home. And thinking about her courage, how she'd kept going without the use of her legs, triumphed over adversity. *Ad astra per aspera.* He knew the Latin for it. He knew a lot of Latin now.

They were at the edge of one of the transecting ravines, a pretty spot for an alfresco meal. The ravine was steep-sided but not deep, a place of craggy rocks, a trickle of water zigzagging through the cut even at this late date of the dry season.

They'd finished stowing their trash in a plastic bag when Fremont's first shot rang through the pines overhead. They went flat, Lenz instantly in another world of energy—a perp out there, not a cat—Hackett rolling to his left to unstrap his rifle from his pack. They didn't have much cover—a bush or two of chaparral at the ravine's rim. But Fremont had even less. He was standing erect across from them, sixty feet away in a flat line, a revolver in his raised right hand, legs spread like the young Jimmy Cagney at bay.

A second shot came zinging through the trees. What was he, a bad marksman or what? Lenz was full of adrenaline but cool in his head, Fremont a knife man, not a gun man. Lenz hollered, "Police, Fremont! Drop the gun!" But Fremont just stood there, his yellow-jack-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

eted chest a broad target in Lenz's steady, two-fisted aim and Hackett's less steady rifle aim.

Hackett was having trouble, his finger twitching on the knurled surface of the rifle's trigger as he tried to steady his aim. He took a deep breath and held it, watched the sight at the end of the barrel move by itself up past Fremont's head and wander around in the trees until he forced it down again as Fremont shouted, "What's the matter with you guys?" and fired again, the shot a little closer this time. He heard Lenz again tell Fremont to drop the gun, his cop voice firm and clear in the thin mountain air, and then watched Fremont turn his back, put the muzzle of the revolver in his mouth and kill himself, just like that, his body tumbling loosely into the ravine below—the hunt, the whole thing over all at once.

Then, in the sudden silence of the place, Hackett lowered his head to the ground and felt sweat drain from it like shower water as he sucked in trembling lungsful of air.

"We'll have to go get him," Lenz said.

"I'll do it," Hackett said.

"No—*we'll* do it, Hackett. And his gun, too." Lenz watched the big man with care. "You know why?"

"So they'll know down below that he killed himself, that we didn't." Hackett looked pale and shrunken, still sitting on the ground. That *I* didn't, he thought, that *I* didn't have the—heart, the guts. He stood up and got a fifty-foot coil of nylon rope from his pack. He'd come prepared, thinking the thing through many times, savoring it: home from the hills with the prize. But this wasn't what he'd meant, the picture was wrong, not a goddamn *suicide!* He hadn't been able to hold the damn gun still because of some errant muscle in his arm. It'd happened too fast, that's all. And the guy just standing there—

Hackett, the woodsman, gathered rocks and built a small firepit. Tonight he'd cook a decent meal, wouldn't hurry it, and maybe feel hunger when it was time to eat. He didn't yet—he felt numb.

Lenz liked watching the flames grow, the heat welcome in the cold night air, his hands spread toward it. And it'll keep the lurking varments at bay, he thought, glancing around. He'd never make a mountain man and had given up trying. But Fremont's body, wrapped in plastic five feet away, didn't bother him a bit—a dead perp, with no expensive trial to follow—Hackett maybe right about

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that a new thought in his tired mind. Shoot first and keep a library open somewhere.

Hackett was sulking and Lenz wasn't sure why. After they'd brought Fremont up from the ravine, he'd roamed around by himself, picking up rocks and wood for his fire. And now he hunkered there, staring into the flames.

Lenz said, trying something, "That girl you brought down from up here a couple of years ago, Bill—was she hurt?"

Hackett poked at the fire, not looking up. "She could walk. Not like our man here."

"So not hurt."

"She had a broken arm, and some bumps and bruises."

Lenz could leave it there or probe for more. He wanted Hackett talking, loosened up. He said, "Tell me about it."

Hackett sighed. "This boy she was with got down to a phone and called the Sheriff—Wilson. He called me, I called a couple of other guys, and we came up and got her."

After a moment, Lenz said, "That's it?"

Hackett poked his stick at the fire again, moved coals around. "Well, she'd fallen forty or so feet down the side of a cliff and been there a day and a half, scared, with the broken arm, but otherwise all right. Damn fool kids."

After another moment, Lenz said, "You get paid for that sort of thing, Bill?"

"No. I'm a member of the Cody County Search and Rescue Team. Volunteers."

"Was it near here?"

"No. They'd gone north from Crawford's—you and I came east. But it's similar country. Maybe ten miles from here as the crow flies."

"You guys should be commended."

"Yeah, well, we have this annual dinner. What we get is equipment money, a few bucks for gas. Plus speeches."

Lenz grinned. "We get speeches, too, now and again."

Hackett seemed a little more relaxed and sat back, arms around his knees. "I suppose you're wondering why I didn't shoot him."

"Well, I thought maybe you were having a problem with the rifle—"

"No."

"Or that maybe you thought he'd shoot himself."

"No! That surprised me. And, no, I didn't shoot him because I

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

couldn't. He lured us up here to do precisely that, to kill him, and I failed him."

"Bill—if anybody did, *we* did."

"No. You're a cop and you don't do that sort of thing—you go through your routines, you'd hafta read him his goddamn Miranda rights first. But me—" Hackett looked back into the fire.

"Bill, listen," Lenz said, "he was just standing there, wide open, asking for it. No man could shoot him down like that."

"I thought I could," Hackett said. "I mean, given who he was, what he'd done, I was *sure* I could. But—"

"But what?"

"A funny thing," Hackett said. "It crossed my mind while I was trying to get him in my sights. This thing a couple of years ago."

"What thing?"

"Well, this class I took at the County Junior College. Criminal Psychology, I think they called it, something like that. About ten of us in the class, all men, half of whom I knew, friends." He paused, thinking back. "This teacher," Hackett went on, "a retired cop up from L.A.—an energetic guy, full of challenge. We were talking about the Mafia, what makes them tick and why the hell we put up with it. We put up with it, the teacher sez, because of the law, the ever-lovin' Constitution—all those rights you live with, Tom—and this one student, roused like the rest of us, sez they should be wiped out, just like that, all at once, line 'em up and shoot 'em, get it done in one fell swoop.

"Well, the teach looks at us," Hackett said, "and asks, 'You guys could do that? Just wipe 'em out?' To which we reply, to a man, 'You're damn right we could.'

"Then he begins to describe these people, the Mafia. He sez there are about four thousand of them, the hard core, all men, like we were in the class, family men with wives, sons, daughters, grandkids." Hackett was frowning into the fire. "They get up in the morning, go to work and do their thing—which is mostly provide services the public still demands—not the only corrupt guys in town, and trapped in their work like most of us have been most of our lives."

Lenz watched Hackett across the dwindling fire.

Hackett said, "The teacher takes a piece of chalk and draws this rectangle on the board, about a foot high and six inches wide. Then he draws a dot in the middle of it, like a big push-button on a wall, and he sez, 'That button's all wired up like an AT&T nationwide conference-call is wired up, you get the picture?' We said we did,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and he said, 'Okay. Now, if I push this button, four thousand guys die all at once—the Mafia. You understand that?' We said we did. Then he said, 'Now I want you guys, one at a time, to step up here and push that button—*but think about what you're doing.*' "

"And nobody got up," Lenz said.

"Nobody, Tom. Not even me. I thought at the time, Hey, this is nonsense, but I was glued in my chair, couldn't move. And you know what?" Hackett looked up from the fire.

"What?"

"The teacher had set the scene so well that he himself wouldn't touch the switch. He said he'd let the janitor wipe it off the board and hoped he wouldn't be aware of what he'd done. Of course he laughed, but it was spooky."

Hackett added some manzanita on the fire, beginning to feel hungry. "He'd made it a real thing," he said, "as real as Fremont was this afternoon. I learned something that night, Tom, but didn't know that I had until today."

Lenz liked the story, and he'd remember it, maybe pass it on—a story, you might say, written by a cop. For the first time in a long time, he felt a little pride in his work, and almost asked Hackett how big this cop was, but let it pass.

They carried Fremont back down to Crawford's on a stretcher rigged from lodgepole pines with the nylon rope netted between. They got there around noon on Saturday, loaded the Bronco, and took off for Cody City to turn Fremont's body over to the Sheriff. And Fremont's gun.

Wilson had expected a live prisoner and gave Hackett a lot of heavy looks, but finally bought their story as told by Lenz. Lenz had gained some heft over the last few days that Wilson noted and liked.

On the way out to Hackett's place, Lenz said he'd drive back to San Francisco that afternoon, that he could be there before midnight, and wanted to. Hackett didn't object, but about a block from home he pulled the Bronco over to the side of the road. "There's something else I'd like to tell you," he said. "About Mrs. Hackett—how she ended up in a wheelchair."

Lenz tensed a little. He didn't feel a need to know that, but here was the big burly man staring at him again with clouded eyes. Hackett had been quiet most of the way down, and maybe thinking about this was why.

Lenz said, "How did she, Bill . . . ?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It was a Saturday afternoon like this one, about the same time of day, around four–four-thirty. Hackett drove a semi on a regular run between Long Beach, where they lived, and Dallas. From Dallas, he'd phone his wife, just to check in, one of the routines that held a good marriage together. And just as routine, every Saturday when he left the yard at about noon, he'd stop on his way home to buy steaks, a jug of wine, and all the odds and ends that make up a backyard cookout for neighbors of theirs. A tradeoff—one neighbor had a pool they all used, the other a fishing boat moored at Newport. The Hacketts provided the Saturday-evening blowout.

Except on that particular Saturday, eleven years ago this upcoming November, Hackett stopped at a bar across the street from the yard for a beer. Just one.

"You could blame it," he said, "I mean the whole damn thing, on the UCLA-USC football game that afternoon, and I've tried to, God knows, or on Charlie Emmons, the yard boss, who came over and started buying rounds, or on the five bucks I bet on UCLA, or, Christ, on any number of things, but the cold fact is that it's my fault, Tom, that she's in that chair."

Lenz, uncomfortable, waited. He had a picture of a very strong woman in that chair, above it all, above whatever Hackett felt he had to unfold.

"The thing is," Hackett went on, "that Lila liked to marinade the steaks for a few hours before putting 'em on the fire, and when I hadn't shown up by four o'clock she got in her ten-year-old Civic, about the size of a skateboard, went to town, and got creamed by this Mercedes limousine blowing through a red light with a rich drunk at the wheel."

Hackett was staring through the windshield, silent now, and Lenz wondered why he hadn't been able to work his way through the guilt in all these years. Why today, why this afternoon? And why me?

"And now we got this big house on a hill," Hackett said, "and we get—*she* gets—eighty-seven thou a year, and will for the rest of her life." His head swung around, almost aggressively. "She's a rich woman, Tom."

She's rich, not we're rich—putting *that* guilt-ridden distance between them. Also, a kept man around the house, emasculated. But macho in the woods, a tear-em-up guy, constantly playing a two-faced role. Until today, until Fremont, until now. Now he wants to work his way free, Lenz thought, and said, groping, "I take it you don't draw a paycheck from anywhere. But why should you? It'd be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

redundant, wouldn't it? And also take a job away from some guy who needs it. So you volunteer for stuff, which is good. Besides, what the hell, the whole thing seems like a stroke of fate, a piece of bad luck, that's all. Bill, it's hard to say it's your fault."

"And hard to say it isn't," Hackett said. "At least, it has been." He was staring out the windshield again. "But you change, don't you? God, y'know, I've never told this to anyone before." He seemed surprised. "But eventually you discover you're not quite as good as you thought you were—and not quite as bad."

"Hold the thought," Lenz said.

Hackett started the engine and Lenz said, "Wait, I've got a question."

"What?"

"Was Mrs. Hackett painting before the accident, or did that start after?"

"After." Hackett laughed. "All she did before was garden, cook, knit sweaters, and keep house. We've got no kids."

"So maybe," Lenz said, "fate knew what it was doing, Bill."

"Maybe." Hackett moved out on the narrow cambered road. "Yeah, maybe, Tom." He laughed. "It's been a hell of a coupla days, hasn't it?"

Lenz took two of Mrs. Hackett's paintings back with him, gifts she'd almost demanded he take, maybe already sensing some big change in her man. And maybe afraid of it: don't fix what's not broken. Her life, God knows, was in order—*she* wasn't trapped in her work. Well, that was theirs to deal with, not his. But he wished them luck, and thought maybe they'd have some now, it's not all money, is it?

Lenz yawned. There'd be many coffee stops between here and home. He'd slept decently last night, but badly the two nights before. No, three, counting getting up at four A.M. on Wednesday.

Dimly, as he tooled down the winding Cody County road toward I-5, he was aware of having missed two class sessions at his law school. Then reconsidered the word "missed." Had he really? Was he really trapped in his work? Did he really want to get out?

He yawned again—and a little later it occurred to him that maybe he'd passed the only bar exam he'd ever have to. But he'd think about that when he'd gotten home and had about a dozen hours of sleep.

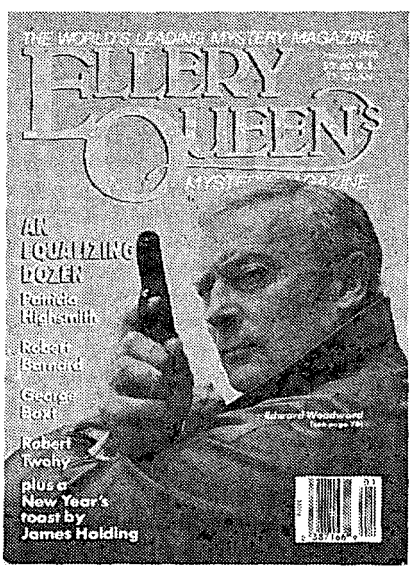
In the meantime, he felt pretty good.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SOME PEOPLE WOULD KILL FOR A COPY.

SUBSCRIBE NOW AND SAVE UP TO 25% OFF THE COVER PRICE

CALL TOLL-FREE 1-800-333-3053



YES SEND ME 12 ISSUES FOR ONLY $17.97

THE WORLD'S LEADING MYSTERY MAGAZINE
ELLERY QUEEN'S
MYSTERY MAGAZINE

P.O. Box 7052
Red Oak, Iowa 51591

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Please allow 6-8 weeks for delivery of first issue. Outside U.S. and possessions $21.97 for 12 issues. All foreign orders must be paid in advance in U.S. currency.

HCSC-8

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE JURY BOX

by Jon L. Breen

Dust-jacket quotes usually need to be taken with a grain of salt. As a general rule, if they come from show-business personalities, they can be disregarded entirely. If they come from other authors, your degree of acceptance of them will probably depend on how you feel about the blurbists' own works.

The third solo novel by Florida journalist Carl Hiaasen comes equipped with all-stops-out blurbs from four of the best and most successful current writers of crime fiction: Tony Hillerman ("Hiaasen is the Mark Twain of the crime novel"), Elmore Leonard ("The funniest book I've read in a long time"), Ross Thomas ("An absolute joy"). Can such quotes possibly be a service to their subject? Could the book be anything but a letdown after such a grandiose buildup? For once, the superlatives are deserved.

**** Carl Hiaasen: *Skin Tight,* Putnam, $18.95. Even after the passing of John D. MacDonald, Florida, with its infinite variety of corruption, continues to be an ideal setting for the contemporary crime novel. The wild cast of characters in this deftly executed black comedy includes an exaggerated version of Geraldo Rivera; a very tall and facially maimed killer known as Chemo, who would be right at home in a James Bond movie; a female movie star with a perfect body, who is convinced she needs a variety of improvements; and a hero named Mick Stranahan, who just wants to be left alone. The novel is even-handed in its treatment of the learned professions, including both a greedy, incompetent plastic surgeon and a greedy, incompetent personal-injury lawyer.

**** Keith Peterson: *Rough Justice,* Bantam, $3.95. The fourth book about New York reporter John Wells is another extraordinary performance, offering a baffling central mystery and some pure suspense writing that bears comparison with Cornell Woolrich. Peterson takes a standard mystery-novel event—hero kills attempted assassin in self-defense—and gives it a new twist: what would such an event be like in real life, if it happened to you or me?

**** Tom Stacey: *Deadline,* St. Martin's, $13.95. In a time when too many novels are excessively long, British journalist Stacey has managed to pack an amazing amount of incident, suspense, and character observation into a 122-page space. Granville Jones, once a Fleet Street legend, is a seventy-six-year-old stringer living out his final years on an island in the Persian Gulf when he gets a chance at one final exclusive—if he can get an explosive document to a working telex machine in time.

*** Raymond Chandler and Robert B. Parker: *Poodle Springs,* Putnam, $18.95. Chandler contributes the first twenty pages and Parker

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the remaining 239 to this posthumous collaboration on the final Philip Marlowe novel, recounting the private eye's possibly ill-advised marriage to the wealthy Linda Loring and their establishment of a household in a thinly-disguised Palm Springs. Parker does a fine job: this is not Spenser-goes-West but a respectful and largely successful attempt to recapture the character of Marlowe and the flavor of Chandler's style and Southern California milieu. The collaboration has also inspired Parker to one of his better mystery plots.

*** Robert Barnard: *Death and the Chaste Apprentice,* Scribners, $17.95. With its background of the Kitterick Arts Festival, which offers productions of opera and obscure Elizabethan plays, and occasional parenthetical snippets from bad reviews, the latest Barnard will remind some readers of a Simon Brett. With the usual wit and satire, a strong puzzle, and a surprising and credible murderer, this adds up to average Barnard, which translates as very good.

*** Talmage Powell: *Written for Hitchcock,* Rutledge Hill Press, 513 3rd Avenue South, Nashville, TN 37210, $9.95. The highly prolific and skilled Powell presents twenty-five stories, all originally published in *AHMM* and all examples of the ironic short mystery associated with that magazine and with the Alfred Hitchcock TV show. Many present familiar situations but usually with an original twist, and while some work far better than others, all show the mark of a talented writer and a practiced professional. (Recent months have also seen collections of stories by Jack Ritchie and Henry Slesar. It would be good to have gatherings from some of the other longstanding short-story specialists as well. Some possibilities, among many: James Holding, Clark Howard, James Powell, William Brittain, Josh Pachter, William Bankier, John F. Suter. Are you listening, publishers?)

** John Lutz: *Time Exposure,* St. Martin's, $16.95. Not unexpectedly, the latest novel about St. Louis private eye Nudger is beautifully written, with much humor and character insight. Unfortunately, the initially tantalizing plot proves disappointingly thin, and Lutz deserts it for chapters at a time to concentrate on Nudger's culinary and romantic life.

** William Shatner: *TekWar,* Ace/Putnam, $17.95 *Star Trek*'s Captain Kirk credits Ron Goulart with assistance on this enjoyable if unexceptional science-fiction/private-eye hybrid set in Twenty-second Century Los Angeles, and there's much distinctive Goulartian humor in the narrative. Tek is a brain-stimulating drug, and its users are of course called Tekkies.

Another new book that at first glance seems to have greater interest for science-fiction than mystery fans is *Foundation's Friends: Stories in Honor of Isaac Asimov* (TOR, $19.95), an original anthology edited by Martin H. Greenberg in celebration of Asimov's fiftieth

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

anniversary as a writer. Just as the amazingly prolific Dr. A. often crosses over into detective fiction, so do these homages. Edward D. Hoch contributes an extremely clever story about the Black Widowers, longtime *EQMM* favorites, that could easily pass for one of Asimov's own. Edward Wellen provides a new case for the science-fictional detective, Dr. Wendell Urth, concerning the death of a biochemical researcher on faraway Terrarium Nine—the surprising nature of his research will certainly appeal to Urth's creator. Though it lacks a detective element, Frederik Pohl's "The Reunion at the Mile-High" is an especially noteworthy piece, starting out like a nonfiction memoir and turning out to be an affecting and wistfully ironic piece of alternate-universe fiction. Many contributors ring new changes on the Three Laws of Robotics: in one tale, Harry Harrison involves his series adventurer, the Stainless Steel Rat, with a descendant of robot researcher Susan Calvin, while Connie Willis's story is a clever and gentle satire in which Asimov, still going strong well into the Twenty-first Century, himself acts as a detective in a robotics problem. The Willis story also finds the great man celebrating the publication of his one-thousandth book: *The Asimov Guide to Asimov Guides*. Other contributors include such stellar s.f. names as Pamela Sargent, Robert Silverberg, Barry N. Malzberg, Poul Anderson, and Orson Scott Card.

Another anthology gathers old and familiar stories rather than originals, but it certainly represents a bargain in terms of total wordage. *The Mammoth Book of Great Detective Stories* (Carroll & Graf, $8.95), a trade paperback, fills over 600 pages with the contents of three British anthologies edited by the late Herbert van Thal, *The First, Second,* and *Third Bedside Book of Great Detective Stories,* originally published in 1976, 1977, and 1978. Most contributors are British classicists, ranging from pioneers like Collins and Hornung to contemporaries H. R. F. Keating and June Thomson; a couple are French or Franco-Belgian (Gaboriau and Simenon); and somehow Raymond Chandler found his way into the third book.

Much less of a bargain is the latest Agatha Christie omnibus. *Three Puzzles for Poirot* (Putnam, $29.95) gathers *Poirot Loses a Client* (1936), *Funerals Are Fatal* (1953), and *Third Girl* (1966), not the best of the Belgian's cases but well worth reading. The price, though, is a bit staggering at a time when omnibus reprint volumes are often published at much lower hardcover prices than original books —Parker's *Early Spenser* (Delacorte) goes for only $13.95.

© 1990 by Jon L. Breen.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* Black Widowers story by

ISAAC ASIMOV

"I'll tell you what I find a bit annoying about science fiction," said Drake. "I don't like the anti-scientific conventions it makes use of."

Nemerson said coldly, "What anti-scientific conventions are you talking about?"

"Time-travel, faster-than-light velocities, anti-gravity, telepathy, and so on. Those things are included routinely in four-fifths of the stories that are written, and all are impossible. How many science-fictional characters have slipped through a space warp, for instance, and found themselves in a different universe? Quite impossible . . ."

LOST IN A SPACE WARP

by ISAAC ASIMOV

Emmanuel Rubin, as far as it lay within him to do so, looked apprehensive. He fingered his straggly beard and glanced at his watch. It was well after seven in the evening and his guest had not yet arrived.

The other Black Widowers had all assembled for their monthly banquet at the Milano. Even Thomas Trumbull, the cryptologist, had scowled his way to the head of the stairs that led to the Widowers' private dining room and helped himself gratefully to the drink that Henry, that peerless waiter, had kept ready for him.

Geoffrey Avalon, the patent attorney, looked down at Rubin from his lordly six feet two inches (so that they were always the long and short of the Club when they stood together) and said, "I take it, Manny, that you made certain your guest knew where and when we

© 1990 by Isaac Asimov.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

were meeting and that dinner always begins precisely at seven-thirty."

"Absolutely," said Rubin explosively. "He got the usual card giving him the full details."

"I need not tell you," said Avalon, "that our postal service is not always to be relied on."

"Which is why I confirmed everything by phone yesterday," said Rubin. "I should," he added reflectively, "have called for him and brought him here bodily, but he said he had an afternoon date and would arrive on his own."

Mario Gonzalo drifted over, thumbs under his maroon-velvet lapels, and whispered, "Trouble, Manny?"

"As you see, Mario," said Avalon, "Manny's guest is late."

"So he's late. Maybe he's always late. With some people, it's a habit. Look at Tom Trumbull."

"I'd rather not, ordinarily," said Rubin. "And I can't tell you if my guest is always late. I don't know him that well."

"Then why did you invite him?" asked Gonzalo.

"Because he's a promising young writer."

"Oh, Lord," said Trumbull, from some distance away, "another mystery-writing wacko."

"Not mysteries," said Rubin indignantly. "He does science fiction, and does it very well. Or so Asimov says. He recommended him as someone we would enjoy—though I admit I'm dubious about Asimov's taste in these matters."

Gonzalo said, "You mean Isaac Asimov, the well known science-fiction writer."

"I mean Isaac Asimov, the much talked-of science-fiction writer. He does the talking himself, of course."

Avalon smiled. "Why don't you ever bring *him* as a guest, Manny?"

Rubin's eyes opened wide and glared through the thick lenses of his spectacles. "Are you mad? There isn't a person here who could endure him for five minutes. Insufferable, conceited—"

"Talking about yourself again, Manny?" said Roger Halsted, who joined the group.

Rubin swelled visibly, but at that moment there was the sound of footsteps on the stairs and, as a head rose into view, Rubin's expression lightened.

"Ah," he said, "Gary! I'd almost given up on you."

Rubin's guest made his full appearance. He looked young and was rather slight in build, with a prominent chin and a lowering glance.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He was carrying an umbrella that looked large, cheap, and insubstantial.

Rubin took him around with delighted relief—"This is Gary Nemerson"—and the young man shook hands one by one as each Black Widower was introduced. "Geoffrey Avalon—Mario Gonzalo—Thomas Trumbull—James Drake—Roger Halsted. First names all around," Rubin added almost jovially.

Avalon said, "Is it raining, Gary?" He stumbled slightly over the first name, since formality was mother's milk to him.

"No," said Nemerson brusquely. "It's been threatening all day, but it hasn't rained. I should think it would have, after I lost my umbrella—or mislaid it—or something."

Drake cleared his throat. "If you'll look at your fist, Gary, you'll find your umbrella."

Nemerson stared down at the umbrella and shook it aggrievedly. "This isn't it. I just bought it as an emergency measure on my way here." And he placed it in the umbrella stand where several other Black Widower umbrellas of varying vintage were standing.

Henry said, "May I serve you something to drink, sir?"

Nemerson looked at Henry absently. "A little white wine."

He hadn't yet finished it when Henry announced that dinner was being served.

Gonzalo managed to find a seat next to Nemerson. "Do you know Isaac Asimov?" he asked.

"Certainly," said Nemerson. "He's a big name in our field."

"What kind of guy is he? Manny considers him a monster of vanity and arrogance."

Nemerson relaxed into a smile. "He always says things like that. Actually, Rubin and Asimov are good friends. They'd give each other anything they have—except a good word. The trouble with Asimov is he's passe."

"Passe?"

"Absolutely. He still writes the same stuff he wrote forty years ago. He doesn't know any better. It keeps him popular with the younger readers and I suppose that's all he cares about."

Drake said, "I read science fiction now and then, and I consider Asimov a fair writer—though not as good as Clarke, of course. But I'll tell you what I find a bit annoying about science fiction." He coughed at this point, looked at his half finished cigarette, muttered,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I've got to cut down on these," and stubbed it out. "What I don't like is the anti-scientific conventions it makes use of."

Nemerson said coldly, "What anti-scientific conventions are you talking about?"

Drake shrugged, reached for another cigarette, and stopped himself. "Time-travel, faster-than-light velocities, anti-gravity, telepathy, and so on. Those things are included routinely in four-fifths of the stories that are written, and all are impossible. How many science-fictional characters have slipped through a space warp, for instance, and found themselves in a different universe? Quite impossible."

Nemerson said, "The skill of the science-fiction writer lies in making all these impossibilities seem plausible. He deals, after all, with the consequences of technological change—the *human* consequences, not with the change itself. Who cares if a particular change isn't likely if the consequences are interesting?"

"Besides," put in Halsted, "every form of literature has its conventions. In the mystery field, how likely is it that an amateur sleuth will bump into a mysterious murder wherever he goes? Or that a private eye can consume a gallon of scotch every day and be knocked out by a blow on the head every other day without pickling his liver and scrambling his brain?"

Trumbull added acidly, "And romance writers find all the heroes handsome and all the heroines beautiful and no one ever has a wart or burps at an embarrassing moment."

Avalon said, "Conventions are the behavioral shortcuts of a culture."

Nemerson said, "And what makes a space warp so impossible, anyway? I could swear I've just experienced one."

But Rubin was trumpeting over his shrimp scampi, "What makes all you non-writer types such experts on literature? Why don't you wait for the grilling and talk to Nemerson instead of to each other? I've given up expecting you to listen to *me*."

By the time the coffee was served and Henry had placed the brandy bottles on the sideboard, the Black Widowers were in their customary state of benign repletion and even Rubin was almost benevolent as he rattled his spoon against the water glass and said, "Roger, will you do the honors and grill our guest?"

"Wait—I want to ask a question!" said Mario.

"Later," thundered Rubin. "Go ahead, Roger."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Very well," said Halsted in his quiet voice, as he licked the last of his *coupe aux marrons* off his spoon. "How do you justify your existence, Gary?"

"By being a science-fiction writer," said Nemerson with a snap.

"You consider that important, do you?"

"Yes, I do," said Nemerson, offering no details.

Halsted asked for none. He said, "And how long have you been writing science fiction?"

"I made my first sale five years ago."

"A novel?"

"No, my first novel is now in press, and I've got a contract for a second one. Till now, my appearances have been in the magazines."

"Do they pay much?"

"No, but I get along."

Again there were no details, and Halsted asked for none. "Are you married, Gary?"

"No." An internal struggle seemed to twist Nemerson's facial expression. Then he said, "I've been contemplating it."

"When?"

"When my novel is published and does reasonably well. Then I can justify the economic risk of marriage—I think."

"You think?"

"Well, it's a serious step."

"How long have you known the young lady?"

"Three years."

"I take it you love her?"

"Why else would I be contemplating marriage?"

"I ask because you seemed uncertain about the matter."

Nemerson nodded. "Right now I *am* uncertain. I'm annoyed with her at the moment."

"Why?"

"I mistrust her sense of humor."

Mario Gonzalo brought his fist down on the table and his expression was dark. "I'm tired of this soap opera that Roger is running. I have a question, and I'm going to ask it. You said you just experienced a space warp, Gary. When and how did you experience it?"

Nemerson looked honestly surprised. "A space warp?"

There was a general stir about the table. Avalon said, "What's this about a space warp, Mario? What are you talking about?"

Gonzalo said, "Gary said it when the rest of you were blatting

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

your heads off, but I'm next to him and I heard him. He said he experienced a space warp, or thought he did. I heard him say that."

Nemerson's face cleared up. "Yes, I did, come to think of it. And that's exactly what I'm talking about right now—about mistrusting Marilyn's sense of humor. —Marilyn is my fiancee."

"What's she got to do with a space warp?" demanded Gonzalo.

Nemerson said, "Space warp was just an expression because Mr. Drake—uh, Jim—brought it up. Actually, I was thinking about my umbrella, the one I lost." He made a wild, outward gesture. "The hell with it. I don't want to talk about my umbrella. Ask me about science fiction."

"No," said Gonzalo, "you don't set the rules on questions, Gary. We do, and you have to answer. That's the condition of the dinner. Manny, you're the host and he's your guest. Tell him."

Rubin pursed his lips, then said, "It goes against the grain to have to agree with Mario, but I'm afraid he's right, Gary. If he wants to hear about the umbrella, you'll have to tell him about it."

"The space warp," said Gonzalo. "That's what I'm after."

"As a matter of fact," said Trumbull, his forehead corrugating, "I'm rather interested in hearing about this combination of umbrella and space warp myself."

Nemerson sighed. "It's something that's of interest only to me, really. I have—or had—an umbrella. It was a folding umbrella that was so small it could fit comfortably in my overcoat pocket, but opened to a considerable spread and could withstand a brisk wind. It was an ideal umbrella. I'd owned it for years, and now I've lost it. I doubt that I'll ever be able to replace it with one as satisfactory and I'm very upset about it."

Avalon said, "I imagine everyone here has lost various umbrellas in his life. You go out with one and take a taxi. By the time you get to where you're going, the sun is coming out from behind the clouds, so you forget you have an umbrella and you leave it behind in the taxi."

"Or," Drake said, "you put it in an umbrella stand, and the rain starts coming down hard and some idiot who didn't bring one of his own calmly appropriates yours."

"That's not how it happened," said Nemerson. "I didn't leave it in a taxi and I didn't have it stolen out of an umbrella stand. Nothing like that. I lost it in Marilyn's apartment."

"Your fiancee's apartment?"

"Yes."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Gonzalo said, in annoyance, "Where's the space warp? I want to hear about that. Tell the whole story, Gary."

Nemerson frowned. "What's to tell? You're making an epic out of a cameo. But all right. Here's the way it goes. Marilyn was having a day off—she works as an administrator at a hospital—and I thought I'd drop over to her apartment in the afternoon and spend some quiet time with her before coming to this appointment. I suppose you don't expect me to give you the details of the conversation or of anything else we did."

"No, no," said Rubin, "it's understood we don't try to break down the walls of decent privacy. Stick to the umbrella."

"Well, as you know, it's been threatening rain all day, so I took my umbrella. Ordinarily I'd put it in the pocket of my overcoat or raincoat and then forget about it till it actually rained. If it didn't rain, it would stay in the pocket safely. However, it's been a steamy, sticky day and wearing a coat of any kind, even a thin raincoat, would be ridiculous, so I carried the umbrella—in my hand."

"Where else would you carry it?" asked Drake mildly.

Nemerson said, "Listen, when I say I carried it in my hand I mean I held it there and never let go. I'm always conscious of the risk of loss—of anything, not just my umbrella. I'm always fanning my pockets to make sure my wallet and keys are in place."

"I do, too," broke in Rubin. "When you live in New York—"

"So I hold onto my umbrella. I don't put it down in a taxi or a bus. Marilyn hates the fuss I make over it. Actually, she hates my being systematic and orderly and says I miss the joy of life by not being more easygoing."

"And does that bother you?" asked Halsted.

"Absolutely. I'm a writer, and I intend to set the world on fire. I'm serious and compulsive about my work and I don't believe you can divide yourself into antagonistic pieces. If I'm going to hard-drive my writing and do it with order and method, I've got to do it in all aspects of my life."

Rubin said, "You won't be as prolific as Asimov whatever you do, and he's an extrovert of the extroverts. You should see him when any female approaches within half a mile of him."

"I don't intend to model myself on Asimov," said Nemerson. "He may be prolific and he's been helpful to me, but I recognize him as a trivial man, and I intend to be an important one. —Anyway, I arrived at Marilyn's place this afternoon holding my umbrella. It was still in its folded state, bone-dry since it hadn't rained. Since

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I had no pocket to slip it into, I put it on her kitchen table—it's porcelain-topped and would in no way be damaged by the umbrella. What's more, the umbrella was black, so it stood out unmistakably. When I left, I'd pass the table on the way to the door and couldn't miss it.

"Marilyn made her usual dumb cracks about it. She prides herself on having a sense of humor and claims I don't have one, but my writing is well known for its sardonic aspects so I pay no attention to what she says. —In that respect, at least.

"And, as a matter of fact, we had a pleasant afternoon. Making allowance for her penchant for inappropriate remarks of the kind she calls humorous, she's highly intelligent, interesting, and a warm and affectionate person."

Trumbull broke in. "But what does she see in you, then? I mean, you're the kind of intense, driving person she wouldn't be able to endure."

Nemerson eyed him hostilely and said, "I like to think I have some good points that she values. —Anyway, eventually it was time to leave. Manny had made it plain I was expected to be on time, and I intended to be. There was the umbrella on the kitchen table right where I'd put it and I was about to leave, when Marilyn suggested I help myself to a nice cold beer before going out into the steam. I looked at my watch and decided I had time for one beer if I didn't waste time over it. It was a nice thought, but it disrupted my attention to my umbrella.

"After the beer, Marilyn walked me to the elevator, just ten yards down the corridor. We kissed, and I turned away, but even before the elevator arrived I turned back to her and said, 'I forgot my umbrella.'

"I guess I looked perturbed because she said, 'Well, don't throw a fit, no one's stolen it.'

"Back we went to her apartment. I knew quite well I'd left it on the kitchen table. I'd seen it there when I stopped for the beer and I could have sworn I'd picked it up, but I must have been mistaken—I certainly didn't have it with me. But it wasn't on the kitchen table, either.

"That was a terrible blow. I'd seen it there not ten minutes earlier. The breath just went out of me. Marilyn said, 'It must be *somewhere*.'

"I said, 'I put it right here.'

"She said, 'I know, but you must have picked it up and put it somewhere else without thinking.'

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"That seemed possible, so we went over her apartment. It isn't a large one. She has a living room, with an alcove serving as a bedroom, plus a bathroom, a small kitchen near the front door, and two sizable closets. It's all simply furnished and there aren't many places where the umbrella wouldn't have stood out easily. And I looked everywhere. I even moved the couch to look behind it and under it, moved all the cushions on the couch and the two chairs, looked on all the shelves of both closets, moving things to make sure it hadn't fallen behind. I went through the bathroom and the kitchen, poked into all the corners. I spent half an hour on it, which made me late here, and I tell you frankly I was in such a rage I almost didn't come at all.

"The point is, it was nowhere, absolutely nowhere, yet I'd seen it on the kitchen table not long before I left.

"Marilyn was no help. She's the one who said, finally, 'I guess it must have dropped through one of those space warps you write about.' She may have thought that was funny, but I didn't think so. Anyway, I bought a cheap umbrella at the corner store, got a taxi, and here I am. And that's the story of my umbrella and the space warp."

There was a short pause after Nemerson had done speaking and then Trumbull said, "I would suggest an easy solution. You left the apartment with the umbrella and dropped it in the corridor on your way to the elevator. You didn't notice, and someone came along, spied a poor orphan umbrella, and adopted it out of the kindness of his heart."

"No," said Nemerson savagely. "In the first place, I didn't drop any umbrella, and if I had it would have made a noise. In the second, I said there was only a ten-yard stretch between Marilyn's apartment door and the elevator bank. It's a straight ten-yard stretch and there was no one else in the corridor when we went to the elevator or when we returned. We would, without fail, have seen anyone who passed.

"And if you think that I would be so lost in a passionate kiss at the elevator that I'd remain unaware of someone's approach, think again. Quite the reverse, I don't intend to be caught in such an interlude and I keep my eyes open. And on the way back to the apartment, I scanned the corridor floor and there was nothing there. A black folding umbrella would have stood out—the corridor's well

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lit, the carpeting is pale blue, and there are no crannies into which it could have rolled, even if it could roll, which it couldn't."

"You know," said Avalon, attempting to make his baritone voice soothing, "all of us have undoubtedly lost items in our own offices that seem to have dropped through a space warp. I once had a thin pamphlet I used regularly for the reference information it contained. I was using it once on my desk when it disappeared. I ransacked my office as you ransacked your fiancee's apartment before I, too, had to give up. And then one day, two years afterward, I pulled a reference book from the shelf—one that I rarely used. It fell open and there, nestled among its pages, was my long-lost pamphlet. I'd mindlessly used it as a bookmark in the reference book, and when I cleared the reference book off my desk and put it in its place on the shelf I unwittingly carried off the pamphlet with it. If I'd never used the reference book again, I'd never have found the pamphlet, and its disappearance would have remained a mystery to this day."

Nemerson said, "Fine, but my umbrella wasn't a small piece of cardboard that could find its way into all sorts of random places. It was a compact black cylinder ten inches long or so, and about two inches thick. —You know what I think? I think it was something Marilyn arranged."

"How?" asked Gonzalo.

"How do I know how? She gave it to a neighbor to hold for her, or she threw it out the window. What's the difference how? The point is that if she did this as her idea of something funny, then I won't take it. And I won't take *her* if that's her idea of a joke. Life with her would be unbearable if I had to watch out forever for this sort of thing."

Halsted said, "Aren't you being a bit unreasonable, Gary? You say yourself you saw the umbrella on the kitchen table not ten minutes before you left. What could she have done in those last ten minutes? Dashed to the window? Run out the door to a neighbor's? Surely you'd have noticed any such thing if it had happened."

Nemerson was silent.

Drake said, "Roger's making a good point, Gary. Did you notice your fiancee doing *anything* unusual in the ten minutes between your last seeing the umbrella and your leaving the apartment?"

"No," said Nemerson reluctantly, "I didn't. But that doesn't mean she didn't do something. I wasn't watching her lynx-eyed. She might have done something none of us has thought of. She *must* have done something—unless there really *is* such a thing as a space warp."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Henry cleared his throat. "Mr. Nemerson, may I have your permission to ask you a few questions?"

Nemerson's face lifted in clear antagonism and Rubin said hastily, "It's all right, Gary. Henry is a member of the Black Widowers."

"The waiter?" said Nemerson, astonished.

"An esteemed member," said Rubin firmly.

"If that's the case," said Nemerson, "go ahead and ask, waiter."

Henry said, "Thank you, sir. My first question is this. Is your fiancee eating out tonight?"

Nemerson looked confused. "Eating out?"

"Yes, sir."

"I'm not sure. No, of course I'm sure. She was complaining about my going out. You see, I couldn't have brought her with me, as I most certainly would have tried to do ordinarily, because Manny told me this was a strictly stag organization."

There was a general murmur of assent from the Black Widowers.

"Well, that didn't make me exactly popular with Marilyn. She claimed that if I weren't a male chauvinist pig I wouldn't accept an invitation to a stag dinner. Naturally, I didn't see that— Come to think of it, I wonder if that's why she played the trick on me. Huh, with that kind of desire for petty revenge, the marriage would never work."

Henry said, "I beg your pardon, Mr. Nemerson, but it has by no means been established that your fiancee was responsible for the disappearance of the umbrella."

Nemerson said, "I'm sure she was."

Henry said, "With all due respect, that is a conclusion based on emotion and not on logic. But I am asking if she was going out to dinner."

"Well, she complained that while I was dining out sumptuously, she would have to 'pig out'—her phrase, not mine—on a tunafish salad. I imagine she was just saying that to make me feel guilty."

"Are you saying that she may simply have pretended she would have a tunafish salad in order to play the martyr but that she would actually dine out?"

"No, I don't think so," said Nemerson thoughtfully. "She doesn't like dining out alone. She's not *that* much of a feminist. I'm sure she would be eating at home."

"Then she would be home right now?"

"I'm sure of it."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Henry said, "I have another question. Does she know where you've gone for dinner?"

"Of course. I told you I told her I was dining with the Black Widowers. And I told her what little I knew of the club—what Manny had told me."

"Yes, but did she know to which restaurant you were coming? Did you tell her you were dining at the Milano?"

Nemerson reflected. "No, I didn't mention that. I guess I didn't want her coming to the restaurant, finding an adjoining table, and making faces at us. I didn't know we'd have a private room."

"Then if she wanted to call you right now, there would be no way she could, is that right?"

"I suppose that's right. But why should she want to call me?"

Henry said, "It is my feeling, sir, that after you left, she found the umbrella—and would certainly have called you at once with the news had she known where to call."

Nemerson pressed his lips together, then said unforgivingly, "If she were to say she found it, it would be because she knew all along what she had done with it."

"I don't believe that is the case, sir. I believe I know where the umbrella is and how it got there. I have written down one word on this piece of folded notepaper, which I will ask Mr. Rubin to hold for me. If you will be so kind as to phone your fiancee—and if she tells you she has found it, and if the manner of her finding it matches the word I have written down, then she is quite innocent of your suspicions and the matter explains itself."

Nemerson stared at Henry, then said, "I don't know what this mumbo-jumbo is all about, but I'll call Marilyn."

He rose and went to the wall phone. "I suppose I may use this?"

"Yes, sir," said Henry. "Dial nine first."

With a look of settled dissatisfaction on his face, Nemerson dialed, waited a moment, then said, "Marilyn, this is— *What? You did? Where?* But how—never mind, dear, as soon as I'm through here I'll come over."

He hung up the receiver and turned to Rubin. "Let me see that piece of paper, Manny."

Rubin looked at Henry, who nodded. Rubin handed Nemerson the folded paper. Nemerson opened it, stared at it for a long moment, then fumbled his way to a chair and sat down.

"All right, Henry," he said. "How did you know?"

"You told us yourself, Mr. Nemerson. You said you were on the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

point of leaving your fiancee's apartment, at which time you said you saw the umbrella on the kitchen table. Your orderly way of handling the umbrella meant, to me, that you must have picked it up and held it in your hand as you were accustomed to doing. In fact, you said yourself that you were under the impression that you *had* picked it up. You said you could have sworn to it.

"Your fiancee then suggested you help yourself to a cold beer and you were willing. On a steamy day like today, the beer could only have been in the refrigerator. You opened the refrigerator door and, I imagine, found the beer cans a trifle awkwardly placed. You therefore put down your umbrella on one of the refrigerator shelves while you reached for the beer.

"Forgetting the umbrella, you closed the refrigerator door and drank your beer. In your later search for the umbrella, you never thought to look inside the refrigerator for it. It is simply not a place one would normally think to look for an umbrella.

"However, when your fiancee set about preparing a tunafish salad for herself, she had to obtain the ingredients from the refrigerator. When she opened the refrigerator door, she must have been astonished to see the umbrella there but she had no way of reaching you."

Nemerson held up the folded piece of paper dreamily. "The word Henry wrote was 'refrigerator.'"

Gonzalo said, "Absolutely great, Henry."

"Thank you, Mr. Gonzalo," said Henry.

Nemerson said, "Now why didn't I think of it?"

Henry said, "As I said, a refrigerator isn't a natural place for an umbrella, sir."

"But *you* reasoned it out, Henry."

"Yes, sir," said Henry, "but I did it in the cool, unimpassioned aftermath of the event. Had I been caught up in the immediate unexplained loss, I, too, would have been tempted to wonder about the possible existence of a space warp."

"Q"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* short story by

CAROL CAIL

What had the fight been about this time? Money was a popular topic—Cooper's getting, Janet's spending, and the children's laying waste. Maybe the subject was supper on the table, or rather supper not on the table. You'd think after four marriages Janet would have learned something about men's expectations of a housewife. Darlene hadn't been married even once, but she could have a meal ready by a given hour.

Carol Cail, fifty-two, has been selling short stories, articles, and poetry for over fifteen years, but in an interview recently syndicated in several Colorado newspapers she says she has been able to produce more since she retired in 1988 from Daily Office Supply, the business she and her husband Norman began in Longmont in 1978, and their sons Matthew and Todd have grown and flown. Even though a number of her stories have been about spouse murders, she adds, "I've really got a happy marriage. It's just easier to think of reasons for people who are married to kill each other . . ."

SUPPER ON THE TABLE

by CAROL CAIL

Miss Darlene Witt sat in the dark cave of her back porch, enjoying the percussion of crockery smashing in the kitchen next door. Like a piccolo played by a novice, Janet Riggs screeched unintelligible epithets. Only when the sound and fury had dwindled to an occasional aftershock could Cooper's placating grumble be heard. One last, shivering crash and the night was still.

When the light came on upstairs, frosting the shrubs below, Dar-

© 1990 by Carol Cail.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lene shuddered and retrieved her coffee cup from the uneven floorboards. "Show's over," she told it.

Darlene was only forty-one, but she had a habit of talking to things. She'd considered keeping a diary and decided it would end up a blank waste of money. Talking didn't require any tools.

Adding her cup to the supper dishes piled by the sink, she got to work with detergent and water so hot it stung.

What had the fight been about this time? Money was a popular topic—Cooper's getting, Janet's spending, and the children's laying waste. Maybe the subject was supper on the table, or rather supper not on the table. You'd think after four marriages Janet would have learned something about men's expectations of a housewife. Darlene hadn't been married even once, but she could have a meal ready by a given hour.

She didn't know much about the Riggs family except for Janet's self-proclaimed four husbands. That seemed as unfair as one family having four automobiles when some people didn't have any.

Now if it were Darlene instead of Cooper having a battle with Janet, the subject would always be the same. The brats. Today had been typical. Holding hands like innocents in a forest, the three girls had wandered into Darlene's back yard and immediately metamorphosed into a pharaoh's plague, trampling flowers, breaking branches, exploding tomatoes against the fence.

A woman shouldn't have children if she isn't going to worry about them. Janet hadn't even taught hers the basic courtesies, like calling the neighbor lady "Miss Witt."

"Darlene!" they all screamed, running in tight circles in delicious agitation at her approach.

"All of you go home now—go on!" She clapped her hands as if she was herding ducks.

The littlest—Darlene didn't know any of their names—curled bare toes into the grass and a forefinger into her nose. The middle child screwed her underpants higher before sitting down on the hammock of tomato vine to examine the bottom of one grubby foot. The oldest scooped up a fist of garden soil and sifted it over her sibling's hair. Back at the gate, their infant brother, wedged to one side of his stroller, spit up sour milk on the roses.

"And Cooper seems such a quiet, pleasant man," Darlene informed the handful of silver she was about to immerse. Why had he been attracted to Janet of the coarse mouth and slovenly ways? Of course,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

some men would consider that unkempt red hair and loose-hipped walk seductive.

Shortly after they moved in next door, Cooper had called on Darlene to inquire if she'd consider selling her house, he being a real-estate agent as well as a CPA. Already the children had, literally, shown their colors, drawing pictures on her sidewalk with crayons and captioning them with pretend words.

But instead of telling Cooper that she longed to sell to get away from his wife's children—probably they each had a different father and only the boy was his—she had smiled into his dark, tired eyes and invited him inside for a glass of iced tea.

She'd never sell this place. Great Grandpa Henry built it to set up housekeeping. Father would have torn out what little hair he had if he could see his undulating farm fields reduced to half acre lots for blue and green clapboard houses, the homestead overrun by preschool delinquents.

Darlene let the water out of the sink, catching her own eye in the grey window above. "He's got such nice broad shoulders," she told it.

The next morning she dressed more carefully than usual and even dabbed on a bit of eyeshadow. Mr. Robert Blankenship was coming to see her at ten. World traveler, best-selling novelist, lecturer, and TV personality. *That* Mr. Robert Blankenship.

Darlene Witt made her living at home at a word processor. Under the trade name Printsmith, she typed for people too busy to type for themselves. Blankenship, her best customer if you didn't consider the promptness of his bill payments, was coming to collect the manuscript of his latest spy saga, which she had managed to type, proofread, and photocopy without censoring a single filthy word.

On the blink of ten he rang her bell. A halfhearted rain brought the smell of concrete into the house when she opened the door. He shouldered into the vestibule with less energy and none of the charisma his television persona displayed. "I don't know why you don't add delivery to your services," he grumbled as usual, caressing the underside of his beard.

"I don't know why you won't trust the mails," she felt secure enough to parry. "You know I don't have a car at the moment."

"You could at least move closer to New York."

He'd never said that before. It threw her off stride momentarily, till she remembered to offer coffee.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In the dining nook, he compressed his stomach to slide into the bench and glowered out the sweating window. His damp clothes smelled of cigarettes as she leaned to pour.

"I have a friend who might patronize you," he said. "If you'd like a recommendation from me." The name he mentioned made her scalp prickle.

"Yes, please." For a minute she stopped hating Blankenship for never dedicating a book to her.

After the ritual coffee, she fetched the box full of manuscript. He promised to put a check in the mails he didn't trust and they filed to the front door. Darlene opened it, started to say the rain had stopped, and felt the words dry up in her throat.

Mr. Blankenship's expanse of white Cadillac parked in her driveway had been more than they could resist. Its expensive exterior looked like a hippy's peacemobile, painted with flowers and stick-figures and suns radiating lines. The girls themselves were inside, rolling back and forth from seat to seat, giggling and squealing.

As Darlene rushed to evacuate them, Blankenship used some of the words she'd typed for him—she involuntarily noted the correct pronunciation. There was mud on the upholstery, and the oldest trespasser was wielding a dripping Popsicle. Darlene yanked her out first, and the other two turned serious, scrambling to escape on their own. In the resultant confusion, Darlene was able to get in several satisfying shakes and shoves before the rout was complete.

"And vandals go to prison!" she outshouted their crying.

Blankenship licked his finger and rubbed at a red heart on the hood, smearing it into a pink circle.

"I'll get the cleaning supplies," Darlene said, one leg on the way.

"No, I'll have it taken care of properly at a garage." If it hadn't been for the earlier expletives and his purple face, you wouldn't have guessed he was upset.

She dithered sorrily outside his closed window as he fastened his seatbelt. He nodded at the windshield and drove out from under her hand on the roof.

Two days later, the postman delivered Blankenship's check with a letter saying he'd found someone willing to deliver as well as type his next novel. Feeling her own face turn at least lavender, Darlene marched to the telephone to complain to Janet Riggs, but the woman was shopping or wherever else she went at that time of afternoon

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

when she should be straightening the house for Cooper's homecoming, and an answering machine took the brunt of Darlene's anger.

Putting her mood to good use, Darlene ripped dandelions out of the front lawn, watching for Janet to come strolling home in her ice-blue luxury sedan. This didn't happen and the sun went down. Darlene sniffed hard, blotted her cheeks with her wrist, and went inside to see which refrigerator leftover had longest tenure.

The doorbell rang in the middle of her favorite sitcom. She growled, getting up, and snugged the knot of her blue-flowered robe. Slapping on the porch light, she peered through the screen at the tall outline of Cooper Riggs, and her frown skidded into a welcoming smile.

"I'm really sorry to call on you this late, Darlene," he said in his earnest, quiet voice. "But I saw your light. You left a message on the answering machine that sounded kind of urgent."

"Come in," she said, bumping his shoulder with the door in her haste. "The message was for your wife. I don't want to bother you with our little problems." She emphasized "little" and tittered at its aptness. "The children. I'm afraid they've been very naughty."

She led him to the inappropriately named family room. Pointing at the most comfortable chair and snapping off the TV, she settled onto the couch and tucked her white legs out of sight. Cooper sat forward, arms on knees, hands clasped, and smiled with his mouth while his eyes grieved. "Tell me, please," he said.

She did, toning it down with sighs and shakes of her head and phrases like "unsupervised little ones" and "forgive me for saying."

When she slowed to full stop, he regarded her over his interlocked fists. "I don't know what to say," he said. "I just don't know what to say."

"You needn't say anything," she assured him with a magnanimous wave of one hand. "It isn't your fault."

"No, but it is. I feel responsible for my wife's poor behavior. The children—"

She waved the other hand.

"How can I make it up to you?" he asked in a soft voice that sent a shiver skipping down her backbone. "I'll think of something," he almost whispered.

The last scraps of her anger melted under his slow grin. "I hope you will," she dared to say in a fair imitation of his seductive purr.

What he thought of was to fix her front-porch steps.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The top riser, cracked with age, had groaned ominously under Cooper's weight when he left half an hour and one cup of coffee later. The next afternoon, Sunday, he strode up her sidewalk, hefty toolbox in casual hand. Darlene weeded along the foundation to keep him company.

It was idyllic until *she* came up through the yard, baby on hip. Janet Riggs was wearing mini-shorts and a shoestring halter, her skin the color of new pennies, her hair all loose and tangly like she'd just got up. The baby was wearing a lumpy diaper and a graham-cracker facial.

"How soon you coming home?" Janet demanded, ignoring Darlene.

"Soon," Cooper said without glancing up.

"How soon?"

"When I get done."

"Cooper, I need to know exactly when you'll be home." She bumped the baby higher against her waist.

He set his mouth in a tight line and swung the hammer at a nail.

"My husband has plenty of jobs to do at home without doing yours for you for free," she snarled at Darlene before flouncing back the way she'd come.

Cooper struck at the step long after the nail was home. Darlene hid her pink face in the chrysanthemum bushes, uprooting whatever came to hand. "She's not feeling well," he said eventually, gathering up unused nails.

"In that case," Darlene suggested shyly, "save her the trouble of fixing your supper by having it with me. You can take home a plate for her."

He sighed and stared off into space. "There are women and there are ladies."

She tingled like the time the toaster had shorted out.

The arguing began about ten o'clock. At least, that's when it became audible to Darlene, gently swinging on the back porch. As usual, Cooper's voice was too low to make out his words. Janet's was a buzzsaw screeching higher on the key points.

"Never home—the kids—alone—neighbors—" Darlene found herself tapping her toes to the rhythmic repetition of "Me—me—me." Several doors banged. Cooper called his wife and got no answer. Another door banged. Darlene shuddered to a stop and waited, ears straining past the incessant crickets.

Two firecrackers—bam, bam—straightened her spine. The crick-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ets faltered and resumed their chant. Standing up, Darlene hugged a flaky porch column. "Ahhhhh!" Cooper cried.

Darlene leaped off the porch and waded through flowerbeds to the common fence, discovered she had forgotten how to climb it, and ran the length of both front yards to reach the Riggs' front door. Its bell played the first three notes of "Ebbtide."

"Help!" Cooper called from deep inside.

Darlene wrestled briefly with the locked screen before galloping around the side to the kitchen door. Through the open window beside it, she could see a refrigerator, a dish-littered table, six chairs at odd angles, and the soles of Cooper's shoes.

Sweeping wide the door, she rushed inside to kneel where he was lying over a nightgowned, unconscious Janet. "Where are you hurt?" She yanked at him, scanning the floor for blood.

He lifted his ear from his wife's cleavage. "She tried to kill me."

Darlene helped him sit back on his heels. Dress shirt unbuttoned, he showed considerable cleavage of his own, but she was too busy looking for bullet wounds to be embarrassed by it. He reached under his wife's knees and dredged up an ugly black pistol. "The recoil knocked her into the refrigerator." He put his hand on Janet's head like he was testing a supermarket melon. "I don't feel any cuts."

"She missed you? Oh, Cooper!" Darlene hugged him so hard he had a coughing fit.

Like a horror-movie Dracula's, Janet's eyes snapped open in her pale face, and her lip curled when they focused on Darlene.

The next morning, Darlene's phone rang before the alarm did. She fumbled it up and murmured something interrogative.

"Darlene," he crooned. "Did I wake you? I'd say I'm sorry, but that wouldn't be true. It's wonderful to hear your sleepy voice."

She bunched herself to a sitting position against the headboard. "Good morning, Cooper. How are you today?"

"I'm fine. You're okay?"

"Yes. How's Janet?"

"Gone."

For a moment Darlene imagined Cooper's long tan fingers administering the coup de grace to Janet's neck after Darlene had withdrawn from the battlefield. "Gone?"

"Packed her belongings and most of mine and moved out before dawn."

"Oh, Cooper, I'm—" She hated lies, so she let the sentence atrophy.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"It's going to be wonderfully peaceful around here without her constant complaining." He breathed hard into the phone, fluttering Darlene's eyelids.

"If there's anything I can do," she promised.

"How about dinner tonight? Somewhere in town—unless you're ashamed to be seen with a married man."

Thinking of ancestors rolling in their graves, Darlene asked, "What time?"

She was up and dressed and floating around the house in a daze of happiness when the phone rang again.

"Darlene," he said. "I really hate to ask you for favors—"

"Nonsense," she insisted out of her euphoria. "What do you need, Cooper?"

"It's just that I have this important client and a closing this afternoon."

He was going to cancel dinner. Never mind. There would be other nights. She could wait—she'd waited this long.

"You want a raincheck on our date," she told him.

"No, no, the dinner's on. But I haven't had time to arrange for a full-time nanny. Could you possibly come over here or let them come over there for the afternoon?"

It took a moment for understanding and outrage to sink in. "You mean Janet left all her children with you? What an irresponsible—for how long?"

"She did take our boy. The girls will stay here quite a while." His laugh needed work. "Until they graduate from high school, at any rate. They're not hers, they're mine."

Darlene stared, horrified, at the receiver in her white-knuckled hand. Thanks to Mr. Blankenship, she knew exactly what to say to it.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a distinguished reprint by

ANTONIA FRASER

Several steps below Nola, a woman with a very old face was smiling at her. At least, Nola thought at the time that she was a woman, but she was so very old, judging from her face at least, that she had already reached that stage of asexuality of appearance which makes it difficult to tell the inhabitants of male and female geriatric wards apart . . .

DOCTOR ZEIT

by ANTONIA FRASER

I'm being pursued by this face, she thought. This old face. I'm frightened. I'll have to do something.

The first time Nola saw the face, she was in the Underground, on the moving stairs coming up to the Tottenham Court Road. The last leg of the journey. Nola always felt like a seal coming up for air at Tottenham Court Road tube with its double staircase. She began to breathe deeply as she reached the top. Nola wasn't particularly strong and she felt she needed all the air she could get before she reached the British Museum, and the somewhat airless atmosphere of its Reading Room.

Nola had been working for the past two years on a study of Seventeenth Century family life. She still had a long way to go. From time to time she told her publisher, lightly, that Twentieth Century family life came first. Which meant the house in Islington with the lovely wooden polished floors, kitchen often full of healthy foods, large country-style garden—all of them rivals for her attention with the British Museum.

And, of course, there were Denis and Johnnie. Denis was Nola's

Copyright © 1986 by Antonia Fraser. Reprinted from Jemima Shore's First Case and Other Stories *by Antonia Fraser, by permission of W. W. Norton & Co.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

husband and Johnnie was her son. To Nola, privately, they were the perfect family unit. She had no wish for another child. Denis protected Nola—he was much older than her—and Nola protected Johnnie. Indeed, when she thought about Johnnie's small but perfectly made body, Nola imagined that she felt the same joy that Denis often told her he felt in her youth, her beauty. (Because of the difference in their age, he said, to him she would always look young, no matter how the years passed.)

On her route to and from the British Museum, Nola's favorite thoughts were of the two of them. She was meditating on Johnnie and how perfect he was—and how in a way she wished he could stay five years old forever, so gay, so ebullient, so amusing, so much her little boy—when she felt a slight tug on her long skirt.

Nola turned round. The staircase was not particularly crowded—it was after ten o'clock and the workers had vanished to their offices. Several steps below her, a woman with a very old face was smiling at her. At least, Nola thought at the time that she was a woman, but she was so very old, judging from her face at least, that she had already reached that stage of asexuality of appearance which makes it difficult to tell the inhabitants of male and female geriatric wards apart.

Nola had certainly never seen the woman before in her life. Nola presumed therefore that she had dropped something. But her bag was standing neatly intact on the step above her. She checked it, looked round again, missed the old woman completely, found the top of the staircase claiming her attention, searched for her ticket, and forgot the incident.

The second time Nola saw the face, it was definitely on a man. On him—that was how she instinctively put it to herself, because despite the fact that the face was exactly the same as the previous face, old, really old, seamily wrinkled flesh hanging round the jowls, wispy hair—she got the odd impression that she was not seeing the same person so much as the same face.

On this occasion, she saw the face and its bearer standing on the platform of Tottenham Court Road tube station as her train drew in. She had a quick, uncomfortable flash of recognition and the face—the man rather—seemed to feel likewise, because he gave a little salute with his hand. The other hand held a stick. When Nola got off the train, he was gone. He had presumably entered the train elsewhere where it was less crowded . . .

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The third occasion she saw the face was more disturbing. It was Johnnie's half term. Nola had a choice of staying at home with him or taking him along with her, since Denis was of course at the office. She decided to take him on a visit to the British Museum. Not into the Reading Room, of course, that was out of the question—perish the thought of introducing rambunctious Johnnie into such a sanctum, even if it had been permitted. But she did think it would be rather pleasant to show Johnnie some of the sights—the Elgin Marbles, vast sphinxes, statues, the sort of thing that an intelligent five-year-old would find quite stimulating to the imagination without precisely understanding them. And she would point to the door of the Reading Room, perhaps, and call it "Mum's office." Johnnie knew about offices. He had visited Denis's office on several occasions. When Denis returned in the evening, Johnnie used to chant: "Backfromtheoffice" as if it was all one word.

They set off early so as to be back for Johnnie's lunch.

But Johnnie and Nola never got as far as the British Museum. At Tottenham Court Road station ("This is where Mum comes to work in the morning"), the most awful thing happened. Johnnie disappeared! One moment he was holding Nola's hand, the next moment there was a sharp tug and he was gone. Through the pressing crowd, he vanished completely. Nola was distraught, sick with fear!

"Johnnie, Johnnie!" she screamed, turning round and trying to battle her way against the incoming crowd.

She struggled back finally onto the platform from whence they had come—and saw Johnnie, tearful, holding the hand of a black Underground inspector, who was bending down and trying to comfort him. And for a split second she also saw that face, that old face, she would know it anywhere, but this time on quite a young and sturdy body: she had the impression of jeans, a T-shirt. The man, woman, whatever it was, smiled and vanished down the far exit to the other line.

Johnnie, sobbing, seemed to expect Nola to punish him. In self-defense, he talked of a horrible old man with a nasty smell pulling him away. "I couldn't help it—he was much stronger than me!" he kept saying.

"Darling, we're going straight home," was all Nola could bring herself to reply.

When she told Denis about it in the evening—an edited version, not mentioning the previous encounters with the face—he said quite

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sharply: "Wasn't it rather silly to take a kid to the B.M. in the first place? I mean, you can go there as much as you like when he's at school. I shouldn't think it would have been quite his cup of tea if you had got there. He's still at the playground stage, if you ask me."

Nola, feeling guilty, forbore to mention her plan of showing Johnnie the door of "Mum's office." Denis was right. Johnnie had not yet reached the sightseeing stage—she was the one who didn't want him to grow up too fast, and now she was trying to force the pace.

The fourth, fifth, and sixth times Nola saw the face were in and around Islington when she was shopping or on her way to fetch Johnnie from school. On each occasion, the face smiled at her. Johnnie was right: it was definitely an old man. The impression of a youthful body and jeans that day must have been part of her general distraction at losing the child. The truth was, she told herself, that he was just a rather mad old man who happened to live in Islington and filled in the time leering at young women—perfectly harmless, if unpleasant.

Nola pulled herself up: not *totally* harmless, if her theory was correct. The old man had tried to kidnap Johnnie. No, that was going much too far in the other direction. Kidnap was too strong a word. Denis had been quite right when he pointed out that Johnnie was only a child, had been known to wriggle his hand free under other circumstances.

"Probably just didn't want to go to the B.M.," said Denis with a smile. He worried a little all the same—not about Johnnie but about Nola. Nola, of all the women he knew, was the most conscientious mother. And wife. And then there was her book. And her health—health which was never strong and could too easily lead to nervousness and collapse if she overstretched herself. Denis and Nola had agreed long ago when they first married never to refer to Nola's condition and to live their lives exactly as if it did not exist. So that Denis decided to say nothing more on this occasion—only to watch Nola more carefully in future. At least he could try and see that she didn't overdo the British Museum stuff.

But of course Nola's projected book had to have its place in her life—along with the house and the garden and the creative kitchen and Denis and Johnnie. The idea had originated as a post-graduate thesis suggested by Nola's tutor, who had a high opinion of her work. It was a task to which her marriage to Denis and the birth of Johnnie put an end only temporarily. Nola got back to it once Johnnie went

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to nursery school. And it was really much more fun doing it in terms of a proper book, being her own mistress, as it were, without the inevitable restraints of the structure of a thesis. Besides which, she no longer needed a grant to support herself while working on it.

"You're my grant," she told Denis. "And a very nice grant, too."

If Nola's progress was slow—school holidays were an interruption—at least it was steady. And she never found any difficulty in picking up her work again where she had left off: the mere entry into the atmosphere of the Reading Room, airless as it might be, transported her. It was in its own way like a secret garden to which Nola—and admittedly five hundred others—had the key.

So that it was fantastically upsetting one morning, as she arrived later than her schedule, to see the face, sitting three along from the seat she usually occupied. Not in her seat, thank God—that would have been too much, might have persuaded her she was seeing an apparition, a sort of doppelganger, an aged version of herself. But she wasn't seeing an apparition, she knew that. This old woman—and she was definitely a woman this time—was real. What was more, as Nola flung down her bag on her seat, the woman with the old face got up and shuffled off in the direction of the North Library. Her old face did not smile, Nola noticed—there was a nasty, set, grumpy look about the mouth above the hanging dewlaps. On the whole, Nola preferred this air of crossness, even anger, to the original leer. Besides which, the old woman had left her books behind on the table. Nola could see them lying there.

Now was her chance to find out a little more about her pursuer. With a feeling of determination, Nola strode down the row of desks and picked up the book lying open. She nearly dropped it with surprise. It was Levin Schücking's *Puritan Family*. It was a comparatively new book which had come out since Nola began working on her subject and Nola had made quite a bit of use of it herself. She didn't know why she was so surprised at the sight of it on the old woman's desk—it was a most disagreeable sensation.

Still more disagreeable was the discovery that the other four books on the desk were all pertaining to the subject of women and marriage in the Seventeenth Century—or, as you might put it, Seventeenth Century family life. Some of them were quite obscure.

Nola took a decision. She put in a slip for Schücking's book, and duly got her slip returned with the scribbled information on the back that it was "Out to another reader"—she couldn't quite read it, but the name looked like Zett.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Nola went to the center desk and explained her problem. "The old lady who has it out is sitting quite close to me, as a matter of fact. But she went out an hour ago and hasn't returned. So I wondered if I could just check something—"

"Name?" said the man behind the desk with professional politeness but without interest.

"Zett, it looks like, or Zelt."

The man's face clouded. "Oh, dear. Old Mrs. Zeit. Or rather, Frau Doktor Zeit, as she prefers to be called. Oh, dear. Well, I'll see what I can do when she comes back."

"Is she—er?" Nola pursued delicately, prompting, not finishing the sentence. The man grinned and raised his eyebrows. She saw that he was quite young.

"Shall we say that she's a little difficult?" he said. "We get them in here. Delusions of persecution. Probably a refugee from somewhere. She thinks everyone's trying to steal her researches from her before she can write her book."

"And her book is on—?"

The young man took thought.

"Seventeenth Century family life," he answered. "Something like that."

He was surprised when Nola, who had seemed such a pleasant person, turned on her heel abruptly and marched out of the Reading Room. Actually, Nola was going to the Ladies' because she felt dizzy. And when she came back, she just collected her bag and left. Frau Doktor Zeit was not there. All the same, she knew she couldn't do any work that day.

This was the point at which Nola thought, I'm being pursued by this face. This old face. I'm frightened. I shall have to do something.

She told Denis that she had discovered an old woman in the Reading Room who was working on exactly the same subject as herself—and for a book, too—she felt that it was a catastrophe. That was as far as Nola could bring herself to relate recent events for the time being. If Denis was sympathetic—and she knew he would be—she could probably nerve herself to discuss the face itself thereafter.

"Don't go to the British Museum, darling, for a bit," said Denis immediately. "You've had a shock. I can see that. Not that some old crone is really going to write a book and steal your thunder. Not a chance—your book will be terrific when it comes out, never fear.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But the truth is, you've been overdoing it lately. A rest—here at home—will freshen you up. Work twice as hard when you get back to it."

"I've got so much to get through!" Nola began rather desperately.

Denis soothed her. "Darling, I know."

"But the time's passing—"

"There's plenty of time. For one thing, Johnnie won't be a baby forever. He won't need fetching and carrying from school forever."

"And I suppose you're going to grow out of needing a hot dinner at night," said Nola wryly.

"Exactly," Denis beamed. "My teeth will soon fall out. Then I shan't be able to eat anything but cereal. That means you won't have to cook at all."

Nola looked worried again. "Don't talk like that," she begged. "On top of everything else. You know I can't bear to think of you getting old."

It was the solitary hangup she had about the disparity in their ages. She couldn't bear a mention of such things, even a light reflection of the fact that Denis would be sixty-five and retiring when Johnnie was twenty-one and going out to work caused her to shiver.

"Now, Nola," said Denis, taking her in his arms, "you really are out to upset yourself, aren't you? As for me, I'm in the pink of health. I had the firm's annual medical checkup today. I forgot to tell you with all this going on. I'm A-okay, the doctor told me. The physique of a young man. Not so the doctor himself, I must say. Talking of the old, this was the oldest fellow I have *ever* seen. I thought I must have made a mistake when I stepped into the consulting room. He looked just like a tortoise."

"A man with a very old face?" Nola asked carefully, after a pause.

"That's right. He might have been Methuselah himself. But he gave me a clean bill of health. Wait a moment, darling, I'm crazy. You *know* him. When I said goodbye, he asked me to give you his love—you *and* Johnnie. But especially you. He's an Austrian. Doctor Zeit, I think his name was—why, darling!"

As Denis held Nola, he felt her go slack and heavy in his arms.

"It was nothing," said Nola a minute later when she found herself sitting on the sofa. "Just one of my turns. Don't fuss me—you promised." She saw Denis's anxious face leaning over her and went on: "Don't *worry*." It was like when they were first married. Her one concern was to reassure him about her.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But Denis did worry. Despite Nola's protests, he insisted on putting her to bed for the rest of the evening. In return, he promised not to fuss her too much the next day.

Nevertheless, Nola didn't even try to go to the British Museum. She didn't feel up to it. And she kept Johnnie at home, too, although Denis didn't know that until later. He generally left for the office before Johnnie went to school. All the same, Nola was determined not to waste the day entirely. She pondered between the rival claims of kitchen and garden. A day cooking for the deep freeze or a day really tidying up the garden before the onset of winter? In the end, the garden won, because Nola had to admit that the garden was showing signs of positive neglect whereas the kitchen wasn't. When Denis telephoned her later that morning, ostensibly to consult her about an invitation, Nola told him, "By the way, I'm clearing up the garden. It's rather fun."

"Just the ticket." Denis managed to sound delighted. "It's a beautiful day for it, too. I walked half the way to the office."

Nola dug a little, created a pile of rubbish, and finally went indoors with the laudable intention of doing to the airing cupboard what she had just done for the garden. She was upstairs on a ladder, reaching for the back of the cupboard, when she heard the front doorbell ring. She looked at Johnnie:

"Johnnie, could you?"

" 'Course I could," he said contemptuously. Later, he shouted something up the stairs about the garden. Nola was rather puzzled. She ought really to go down—but then Johnnie had panted back up the stairs again.

"Daddy sent someone to do the garden for you. So I let him through the back door," he said importantly.

"Oh, I see." Nola was taken aback and suddenly rather chilled. Hadn't she been going to do the garden herself? Denis was treating her like a baby again, not wanting her to strain herself.

Presently Nola looked out of the window and saw the gardener's back. He was wearing jeans and to her surprise he appeared to be wielding a scythe. She looked again. Yes, it was definitely a scythe. In their garden and at this time of year! What was Denis thinking of?

Johnnie was in his room, playing with his little cars in the window-seat. Nola gave him a quick glance and then clattered down the stairs and into the garden.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Excuse me," she said in a voice of authority. "What are you doing with that scythe?" The young man stood up and turned round. He was still holding his scythe as he moved toward Nola. His voice was quite young and musical when he replied, "I'm caring for your garden. Don't worry. I shall be here to care for it after you are gone."

But his face was an old face, a familiar face.

Johnnie, looking out of the window, saw his mother fall down and lie still. Later, he described to his father exactly the man who had come to do the garden, the man with the scythe, in jeans, but a man with a terribly old face. He told his father that the man with the terribly old face had cut down his mother with his scythe. But that was nonsense, of course—a child's reaction to shock. There wasn't a mark on Nola's body.

DID YOU MISS A KEY ISSUE?

BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE

THE WORLD'S LEADING MYSTERY MAGAZINE
ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE

LAST CHANCE TO UNLOCK MORE MYSTERIES IN ELLERY QUEEN
CHECK OFF TODAY THE ELLERY QUEEN BACK ISSUES THAT YOU'D LIKE, AND MAIL WITH YOUR CHECK OR MONEY ORDER. ORDERS TAKEN ON FIRST-COME, FIRST-SERVED BASIS. HURRY! LIMITED SUPPLY AVAILABLE.

ISSUES	$3.50 each
January 1988	☐
February 1988	☐
March 1988	☐
April 1988	☐
May 1988	☐
June 1988	☐
July 1988	☐
August 1988	☐
September 1988	☐
October 1988	☐
November 1988	☐
December 1988	☐
Mid-December 1988	☐

MAIL TO

ELLERY QUEEN
P.O. Box 40
Vernon, NJ
07462

☐ Enclosed is check or money order for $_____
(Cost includes postage and handling)
Make checks payable to ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE

Name _____

Street/No. _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Please allow 4 to 6 weeks for delivery

HCKC–8

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

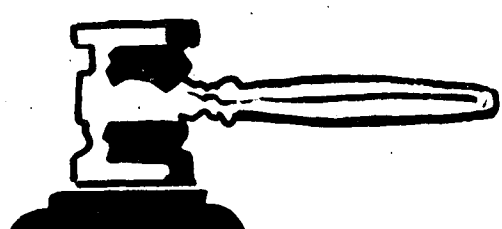
DETECTIVERSE

ANOTHER GRAVE TONE

by JAMES HOLDING

Here lies his Honor, Amos Custiss,
A judge with a flexible sense of justice.
His juries' verdicts had little to do
With the way Judge Custiss followed through,
For the jail terms he imposed in court
Were frequently thought to be far too short—
And he sometimes let a crook go free
On a very obscure technicality.
In fact, he failed, time after time,
To make the punishment fit the crime
Because (oh, shameful to describe)
The judge was an easy man to bribe
When a felon could offer the right amount
To fatten the judge's bank account.
On case after case did Amos Custiss
Pervert and cheapen the name of justice,
Until the judge came face to face
With what was to prove his toughest case—
A case that Amos, although adroit,
Found it impossible to exploit—
His final case, he somehow knew,
The case that killed him. A case of flu.

© 1990 by James Holding.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a ***NEW*** short story by

ROBERT BARNARD

Roger heaved his cases in both hands and left Reception light of heart. In the category boxes by "Reception" ranging from Poor to Appalling he would rate this as Appalling. And under Porterage he could write "Nonexistent." Marvelous. The King's Cross Excelsior bade fair thus far to gain the coveted four stars in his forthcoming Bad Hotel Guide.

A new comic story we would rate Delicious from the incomparable Robert Barnard . . .

AN EXCEPTIONAL NIGHT

by ROBERT BARNARD

"Yes?"

"I have a single room booked for the night. My name is Prescott. Roger Prescott."

The girl at Reception had a look so vacant that any house agent would have slapped a For Sale sign on her. She flipped negligently through a box of cards and shook her head.

"No."

"What do you mean, no?"

"Not here. There's no Prescott got a room booked here."

Roger Prescott suppressed a smile of satisfaction. This looked promising. "Of course I have a room booked. I reserved one by phone and gave my credit-card number."

"No."

A small man with a belly and a sandy moustache bustled up, bringing with him a stench of bitter beer. This must be the M. Ripley named as manager on the board behind Reception, the board which also quoted the outrageous prices charged. "What's the problem?"

© 1990 by Robert Barnard.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"My name is Prescott, and I have a room booked, but your girl here seems to have no record of it."

The manager sighed.

"Effing kids these days." He began flicking through the box of cards, and Roger had an entrancing vision of gravy on the white shirt, what looked like Thousand Islands dressing on the company tie, and bare midriff through the lower shirt buttons.

"You with the American party?"

"Do I sound American?"

"I'm not Professor Higgins, mate. —This'll be it: Rostock. That your credit-card number?"

"Yes, it is."

"Right. No problem. Single room, seventy pounds a night. Just sign the card. Here's your room key. Room 314."

"Could a porter bring up my bags?"

"You what?"

"Is there someone who could bring my cases up?"

"Why? Are you sick or something?"

There seemed nothing else to say. Roger heaved his cases in both hands and left Reception light of heart. In the category boxes by "Reception" ranging from Poor to Appalling he would rate this as Appalling. And under Porterage he could write "Nonexistent." Marvelous. This place could well prove to be a gem.

As he walked past the main door to the lifts, he saw a coach disgorging a party—many of them plastic-marked, the men in unsuitably colorful trousers and jackets, all of them middle-aged. As he pressed the button for the lift, the first of the party came in, shepherded by an Englishman who looked like an ex-Army officer who would stand no nonsense. One of the women stood in the nondescript foyer and looked around rather wistfully.

"Would you say this place had atmosphere? I wouldn't say it had atmosphere."

The lift worked. That was a disappointment. With luck it would be Out of Order before he left next morning. He found Room 314, dumped his cases on the bed because there was nowhere else to dump them, and then opened one and took out his record sheets.

Under Reception, he ticked Appalling and added under Comments: Slovenly, incompetent, foul-mouthed. Under Porterage he wrote: None. This was marvelous. The King's Cross Excelsior bade fair thus far to gain the coveted four stars in his forthcoming *Bad*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hotel Guide. It seemed to have in quintessential form all those qualities that make the British hotel industry what it is today.

He heard an American woman's voice in the corridor outside. "That girl behind the desk seemed a *cretin!* Where do they *find* them?"

He smiled, feeling she was voicing a great existential problem, then set about his preliminary survey of the room. The wallpaper was not peeling off the walls—pity, but the Excelsior was only seven or eight years old. Wallpaper-peeling was particularly a feature of railway hotels. He had vivid memories of one such in London (£80 single room, no breakfast) which had peeling wallpaper, no hot water, and a carpet in tatters. He went to turn on the hot water, then resumed his inspection—it would take ages to come, if it came at all. There must be an Actress-and-Bishop joke there somewhere, he thought. (He sometimes leavened the text of his serious research with traditional jokes.) Hmm. All the expected features: only one pillow, hard lumpy mattress, window filthy, wardrobe door always creaking open and only three hangers inside it, bedside radio not functioning, television seeming to need an electronics expert to get it going.

He took the folder on the desk over to the bed and lay back to relish its contents. No hope here of that classic line: "Room Service: There is no room service." That had been that railway hotel again. No—no mention of it here. That manager would hardly conceive the possibility of such a thing. "Tea-making facilities are provided in the room." He must check that. Wonderful how keen hotels were these days to make the guest do all the work.

"Within easy reach of exciting shops." (In King's Cross?) "Fabulous English and continental dishes in our Olé Restaurant." (Those would have to be sampled.) "An informal serve-yourself breakfast service." (Near-cold fried eggs and croissants like deflated rubber cushions, no doubt.) "Set the alarm by your bed for early-morning waking."

He went to check the water. Barely the faintest touch of warmth there. Marvelous! He went to put further ticks on his report sheets and write up the beginning of the connected-prose paragraph that finished each report. He was licking his lips with relish at the prospect of a hatchet job.

Roger Prescott loved badness. He often felt there must be a strain of masochism in him somewhere. When this book was completed, he had plans for a follow-up book called *The Worst of Everything*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

—plays, books, films, pub lunches, political speakers, cities, newspapers, nightclubs, the lot. It would be marvelous fun to do, he thought. He unpacked the clothes he had packed that morning in the King Charles at Didcot (only three stars that, unfortunately). He put his sponge-bag over the washbasin, noticing that the automatically operated plug was as usual missing, but that (typical touch, the concentration on inessentials) the lavatory paper was folded into a little triangle at the end. Then he put his Barbara Cartland and his E. R. Punshon on the table by his bed and wondered what to sample next.

"This is so exciting!" he heard an American voice say in the corridor, and wondered what on earth there was at the King's Cross Excelsior that could be found exciting.

He switched on *EastEnders,* which came on in a fuzzy, pale shadow of its normal self. Perhaps it would be better to sample the Olé Restaurant. Already his stomach was making noises which in other circumstances might signify hungry anticipation, but which Roger knew to be protest in advance. His stomach had had a series of gastronomic experiences in hotel eateries which should have qualified it for some sort of decoration for bravery under fire. There had been that Canard aux Haricots Verts in Chester—four bony bits of duck apparently cooked in a cheap brand of baked beans in tomato sauce. There had been the Coq au Vin in Cambridge that was chicken fried in sump oil with Lambrusco poured over it. There had been the Escalope Milanese in Gloucester that had been tough beef with tinned spaghetti on top—a succession of culinary offenses so gross as to constitute indecent acts in public places. Roger let anticipation fester, and read a few more pages of his E. R. Punshon.

When he got down to the Olé Restaurant, it was just after eight o'clock. At any time except breakfast, hotel eateries of this sort were all but empty, for experience had taught caution even to coach parties and commercial travelers—the main patrons of hotels these days. Actually, seven or eight tables in the Olé were occupied, which was above average. Roger realized at once this must be due to the lack of restaurants in the stretch between King's Cross and Euston. These people had been forced here by hunger—and would be reduced here to nausea. It was a nondescript place, a thing of formica and pot-plants, with little wickerwork screens making unintimate little nooks, and cutlery wrapped up in bright paper napkins.

When he had sat and settled in his little corner, he surveyed the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

other melancholy diners—mostly solitary or American. Then he took up the menu, which was a large card brightly printed in red and green. It was of the type he always categorized as a "Gosh!" menu. All the dishes were breathlessly described. "A nest of succulent green tagliatelle topped by a ravishing sauce of crab, lobster, and cream, with just a hint of cheese." Gosh! He was watching his weight—which was a problem, with all the junk food disguised as gourmet experiences he had to consume in the course of duty—so he avoided the starters and honed unerringly in on the least promising item on the list of entrees: "Delicious free-range veal done in Viennese style with a pinch of lemon, crispy French fries, and mouth-watering creamed cauliflower."

It was something of a surprise when the waitress turned out to be a delicious blonde—mouth-watering, in fact. Waitresses in these places usually made the girls in Reception look bright. Roger ordered his wiener schnitzel and a half bottle of a white wine from Alsace—from an undistinguished list of six—and then asked: "Where are you from?"

"From Göteborg." She pronounced it Yerterborg, and her smile was positively captivating.

"What are you doing in London?" As if he needed to ask.

"Learning English—to speak it without an accent."

She smiled and went back to the kitchen. Her English, on that showing, was already almost perfect—though Roger knew that once you got Scandinavians off the formalities and the weather, their English tended to slip badly. Still, he hadn't had in mind a conversation about Schopenhauer.

"I brought you the wine now," said the waitress, coming back and showing him a bottle which was barely chilled and already open. This was a new one, thought Roger.

"Already opened?" he commented. "That's unusual."

"Our customers prefer it. Then they are not startled by the pop."

She spoke as if from rote-learning, smiling a smile as if to say that she knew he was too smart to swallow a line like that. Roger meditated a special entry in the appropriate section: "The new habit (first noted at the Excelsior, NW3) of bringing wine to the table already uncorked adds fresh possibilities of customer-extortion."

He sipped the thimbleful she had poured for him. A filthy Spanish table wine.

"Delicious," he said, and winked up at her. Really, she had a quite enchanting smile.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The veal, when it came, was just as he had anticipated: a wafer-thin slice of what could well be pork coated with an indescribable mess of egg mixed with engine oil, tasting like impregnated blotting-paper.

"Bon appetit," said the waitress in creditable French.

The chips were soggy, the cauliflower tough and sour—it was all in all one of the more memorable crimes against food he had experienced. Each mouthful had to be masticated thoughtfully, and what he thought about as he chewed was the waitress. He rarely slept with employees of the hotels he was judging, because it seemed like a compromise with his strict standards of incorruptibility. But there had been exceptions in the past. And it would be very pleasant if there could be an exception tonight.

"What is your name?" he asked when she came back with a sweets trolley laden with chocolaty things topped with glacé cherries.

"Silvia. After the queen."

"Ah—the Swedish queen, of course. And what will you be doing when you close down here?"

Silvia glanced toward the kitchen door.

"I expect I will sleep with my boy friend. He works here, too."

Indeed, standing in the kitchen doorway, regarding them with an expression of ferocious mistrust, was a Latin kitchen boy, his shirt open to advertise his body hair, his head hair slicked back and black as night. The young man's whole stance indicated the strutting, peacock-proud Sicilian Romeo.

"The chocolate mousse please," said Roger.

Later, when she came back with the bill for him to initial, he had plucked up more courage.

"A change is as good as a rest, you know. You could slip up to my room when this place closes."

"I think I will not. My boy friend would not like it."

"It's not your boy friend I'm propositioning. Anyway, it's Room 314, if you change your mind."

As he signed the chit, he realized that the saturnine kitchen Romeo was glowering at him again from the door to the kitchen. Well, he thought, at forty-two it's a good feeling still to be able to inspire jealousy.

When he got back to his room, he added to his notes a pungent comment on the food, but had in all honesty to add that the service had been "friendly." He watched a bit of a sitcom on television, but

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it wasn't bad enough to grip his attention. He switched it off and took up his Barbara Cartland, where he was riveted at once by the predicament of the Lady Fabelia.

Half an hour later, when she first became aware that the handsome Fergus Dalgarno was slipping a note into the white hand of her arch-rival Clabella McShane, he decided that he had had enough excitement for the day. He poured himself a modest whiskey, adding water from the bathroom tap, and was putting on his pajama trousers when there was a knock at the door.

Instinctively, he pulled in his tummy.

He was bare-torsoed and still pulling in his tummy when he put his hands to the Yale lock on the door, only to feel it being pushed open violently from the other side and to find himself confronted by a kitchen knife poked menacingly into his gut by a fuming black-haired figure on the other end of it.

"You try to peench my girl, eh? I keeel you!"

Roger backed nervously into the bedroom. This just couldn't be happening! "I say, really, there's no call for this! I mean, I didn't—"

"I *see* you. I see you from the keetchen. You— 'ow you say?—you chat 'er up!"

"Well, I mean, people *do* that to waitresses—"

It was the wrong thing to say, as he immediately realized.

"Not to my girl! I keel you!"

By now they were in the room and by the bedhead and the tip of the knife was on the flesh of Roger's belly—indeed, Roger was so convinced that it had gone in that he was surprised not to see blood when he looked down.

"I say, really, you know you're taking awfully seriously what was only meant—"

"Not only you chat 'er up—I keel you for that—but you geeve 'er your room number. What you do that for, eh? You think she is a war?"

"No, of course I don't think she is a whore—"

"I keel you twice over for that!"

And, in an intensification of the nightmare, he drew back the long kitchen knife and began making slashing motions from right to left, then left to right, accompanied by vicious snarls that had Roger backing in terror, then tripping in a backward somersault across the bed.

As the lunatic let out a triumphant snarl, Roger picked himself

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

up and dashed for the door and then out into the corridor. The sign Emergency Exit had never seemed more apt, and he sped through it, down the stairs, past the second-floor exit, past the first-floor exit, footsteps all the time behind him on the concrete stairs above, then through the push-bar door and out into the foyer. "Help!" he screamed. "Help!"

If there was anyone behind the Reception Desk, they must have been stretched out on the floor asleep. As footsteps could be heard running down the final steps, Roger sped out half naked into the Euston Road, ran through the drizzle-flecked streets, hearing footsteps behind him and snarls of outrage, and landed up sobbing in the arms of a kindly railway policeman on Euston Station, who considerately took him into custody on a charge of being drunk and disorderly.

"It's a definite breach of the agreement," the military-looking man at the desk was saying. "I've asked all around the group and not one of them had any experience that could be described—"

M. Ripley, behind the desk, looked as if he had slept in his clothes in a sleeping-bag on Salisbury Plain and was listening with bored indifference. But when he saw a black-haired figure crossing the foyer, he called to him.

"Tony!"

The young man, christened Antonio Bellini but speaking unadulterated East End, strolled over.

"Tony, you did what we arranged last night, didn't you?"

" 'Course I did. Put on a great display. 'E'd been chatting up Silvia in the Olé earlier, so that made it more convincing. I think 'e was taken in—in fact, I think I scared the pants off 'im. 'E fled out of the 'otel and I went after 'im to explain and 'ave a bit of a larf about it, but 'e'd been taken up by a copper and I don't 'ave nuffink to do with the law."

"See?" said Ripley to the military gentleman.

"Yes," finished Tony reflectively, "I think 'e 'ad a real night to remember, the gent in three-one-four."

"Three-four-one," said M. Ripley.

"Three-one-four, you told me," protested Tony.

"Christ almighty," said M. Ripley, with no great religious feeling.

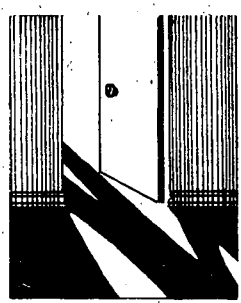
"Three-one-four is *not* one of the Americans on the mystery tour," said the tour escort. "So one of your other guests has had the 'thrilling and mysterious experience' that was promised to one of us."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Bloody hell," said the manager.

"Three-one-four hasn't checked out or paid," said the reception girl, unusually on the ball. "And the maid says the room hasn't been vacated—all his things are still there."

"Right!" said Ripley. "We impound his things. *And*, since it's after ten o'clock, we charge him for an extra day. Isn't it wonderful," he remarked, looking round but speaking to no one in particular, "what Joe Public thinks he can get away with?"



DETECTIVERSE

ONE MAN'S MEAT

by WILLIAM F. SMITH

Said posh restaurant critic Sam Lear,
"I've been told the best steaks are served here,"
But he had to complain
As he died of ptomaine,
"There's no doubt I received a bum steer."

© 1990 by William F. Smith.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* Baytown story by

WILLIAM BANKIER

Their father had taken off. One of the women with whom he had been cheating on his wife moved to Montreal and Max went after her. There was a single letter from the city, then no more. He didn't even return for Serena's funeral last winter after she died from liver disease.

"I bet I know how to go about finding him," Carrie said.

"This feels bad," Peter said. He got up and carried his empty plate to the sink.

"Leave all that stuff, Shorty," Berriman said.

Peter stiffened and did Brando in Streetcar. *"My place is cleared. You want me to clear your places . . . ?"*

SHORTY

by WILLIAM BANKIER

Peter Shorvil told his sister Carrie, "Dave says if you aren't moved back home by the weekend he's going to find Ted and fix his clock."

"Let him try. I'll get the police after him."

"We all know the Baytown cops. They may talk to Dave or they may not. In any case, Ted here will be in Intensive Care."

Carrie Shorvil glanced at her boy friend. You could never tell with Ted Berriman. The handsome face was expressionless. He was standing at the stove, scrambling eggs. She and Peter were at Ted's kitchen table, drinking coffee. Dave, her older brother, a waiter at the Coronet Hotel, had experienced a run-in with Ted when he'd worked there for a while as a desk clerk. Something about Dave wanting to sneak upstairs after closing time with a lady guest and drink in her room. Ted said it was against hotel policy and made

© 1990 by William Bankier.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dave come down. And there was the time Dave brought Ted a beer behind the desk on a hot Saturday night and Ted refused to drink it because he was on duty. Carrie's big brother wanted her to hang around with a real man, not this poor excuse.

Ted's advancement from the hotel to a job on the air at CBAY didn't impress Dave. In his opinion, Ted's late-night DJ show was a lot of jabber, none of it funny. And the music was creaky old jazz instead of solid rock-and-roll. But the killer, the moment when Dave really decided to run Ted Berriman out of his sister's life, had taken place late one night a month ago when Dave banged into the old house on Station Street and caught the two of them engaged in heavy petting on the sofa. Carrie got herself together and hurried to placate Dave in the kitchen. He was drunk, his face dark with suffused blood. She persuaded him not to hammer Ted on the spot, but he went back into the front room where Ted was sitting on the sofa looking as if his entire family had been lost at sea.

"If I ever come in here and see anything like that again!" The veins in Dave's forearms throbbed above his clenched fists.

Carrie waited for Ted to defend himself—not physically, nobody could do that against Dave—but she wanted him to say something that would get him off the hook and let her feel justified in linking her life with his. When he said nothing, she had trouble with it. Carrie liked a certain amount of macho in a man. Years ago, she had found it exciting when the boys took their cars and drove north of town late at night to play chicken on the deserted highway. Dave and Peter had had some terrifying challenges. Thankfully, Peter's car always swerved aside.

Now Ted brought three plates of eggs to the table and said, "You're welcome to stay here as long as you want to, Carrie."

"I'll never move back home as long as Dave is there," she said. That embarrassing night, after Ted went home, Dave had said such awful things about him it left her no choice but to move out. It was as if the only way she could refute the assassination of Ted's character was to rush to his side.

Peter said, "Have no fear, Teddy. If Dave comes after you, I'll run interference."

"Thanks, Shorty," Ted said as he sat. "Now I feel safe."

The nickname had been okay back in the old days at the East Hill playgrounds. Ted was still allowed to use it in private. But now that Peter was an assistant manager at the A&P, he was Peter or Mr.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Shorvil to staff and customers. He was five foot one. During his childhood, nobody knew anything about growth hormones.

Years ago, the family used to perform the ritual with the yardstick against a doorframe. This was when the old man still lived at home, and a long time before their mother died. Dave's pencil markings kept advancing up the panel and so did Carrie's, but Peter's hardly moved at all. He decided not to let his disappointment be the end of the world. The tug at his throat was a feeling Peter learned to displace with energy and good cheer. He became Shorty Shorvil and he was fast on his feet. These days, he was dapper in his red store jacket. But the plastic badge on the lapel said PETER.

"I wonder," Carrie murmured. She looked crisp and efficient in the white outfit she wore to work in the doctor's office. Her chestnut hair was cut short and streaked with yellow flashes that gave her the look of a dangerous animal.

"Uh-oh," her brother said.

"Listen—if Dad was around, Dave could never pull this stuff."

"Dad is long gone."

"But if we could find him, we could tell him about me and Ted and how we want Dave to leave us alone."

As recently as three years ago, Max Shorvil still lived at home and worked on the lakeboats that docked in Baytown harbor. It had never been a happy family. The violence was directed mainly at older brother Dave and partly at Serena, the mother. Dave would try to come to her aid and Max would knock him around. Never with his fists. Always there were the looping backhands, like slabs of meat landing on a butcher's block. Dave would end up white-eyed, his face mottled. Serena would be in the back bedroom, sobbing. Max would finish one or two more drinks and then go in there with her.

Max took off. One of the women with whom he had been cheating on his wife moved to Montreal and Max went after her. There was a single letter from the city, then no more. He didn't even return for Serena's funeral last winter after she died from liver disease.

"I bet I know how to go about finding him," Carrie said.

"This feels bad," Peter said. He got up and carried his empty plate to the sink.

"Leave all that stuff, Shorty," Berriman said.

Peter stiffened and did Brando in *Streetcar*. "My place is cleared. You want me to clear your places?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"There's a letter from Dad in Mother's room," Carrie said. "In the bedside drawer. It has a Montreal address on it."

"He may not still be there."

"It's a starting point."

Ted knew that once she decided to do something, you could just as easily halt the progress of the sun across the sky as persuade her to change her mind. He said, "I won't be able to go. In addition to my late-night show, I'm working on the Baytown True Crime series. I had a hell of a job getting them to let me do it."

"Relax," Carrie said sharply. "Nobody's asking you to come."

Peter came back to the table and picked up the remains of his coffee. "I have some holiday time coming to me at the store. I can drive you down to Montreal."

The boarding house on St. Hubert was still in business. Peter kept pronouncing the street sign in his Baytown High School French. "Laroo San Yoobear. Larooooo San Yoobear!"

It was early afternoon after four hours on the highway. The building, its number verified against the scrawled return address on Max Shorvil's letter, was a grey-brick structure with an ornate wrought-iron gallery along the second floor, reached by a steep flight of steps. Peter rang the bell at the ground-floor doorway and then stood beside his sister.

The woman who opened the door was handsome. Her jet-black hair was parted in the middle, drawn back loosely and tied with a green ribbon. Dark skin, high cheekbones—she might have been Algonquin or Iroquois. *"Bon soir. Puis-je vous aider?"*

"Bon soir," Carrie responded. *"Je cherche*— I'm sorry. We're looking for our father."

"Is he a resident?"

"He was three years ago. He wrote us a letter from here. Max Shorvil."

"Ah, *oui*— Max. Come inside, please."

Her name was Estelle Durand. She sat them down in a small living room and went to get tins of cold soda. She spoke mostly to Peter, avoiding eye contact with Carrie. Max had stayed there on various occasions when his boat docked in Montreal. Last time was nearly three years ago. He'd had a visitor, said it was his son. They went away and he never came back. He left a few things in the room—underwear, socks, some shaving stuff. "I kept it for a while, then threw it away. I'm sorry."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Peter said to Carrie, "Was Dave ever in Montreal?"

"He disappears for days at a time. He could go anywhere."

"I was worried about this young man," the landlady said. "He looked tough. They didn't argue, but they spoke carefully. I was worried about Max. Your brother, he came in a taxi. It waited outside. When they drove away and Max never came back, I telephoned the taxi company. They know me. I was able to get the driver to remember where he took them."

Carrie sipped the cold soda, watching this woman talking to her brother. There was a lot of loyalty in her character. Her own mother had never showed a sign of it—Serena was too busy defending herself against drunken abuse. Like everybody, Max Shorvil had different sides to his personality. Perhaps he spent his anger on his wife and children, saving his likeable side for Estelle Durand.

"Where did Dave take our father?" Carrie asked.

"To a motel on Upper Lachine Road. I went there the next day and waited outside. I watched the units for a long time. Max never came out. But I saw the young man—Dave?—and a woman. She was older. Long blonde hair. It was, how you say, overdone? She was pretty, but she looked hard."

The landlady offered them supper, but Peter said they had to get back to Baytown. At the door, Carrie said, "I'd like to talk to you some more. Maybe I'll get back here someday and you'll let me take you out for a meal."

On their way back to Baytown in the car, Peter was hammering on the steering wheel. "He did it! Dave drove down here and took out Max!"

"You're about to kill us," Carrie said as the car nearly swerved into the path of an oncoming bus. "That was Mother with him, wasn't it?"

"Had to be."

"I remember now. They left town for a couple of days around that time. Dave wanted a holiday and he and Mother drove away in the truck."

"Maybe they ran into Max by accident."

"No. Dave came to where Father was staying." Carrie watched the Quebec landscape merge into Ontario as the sun went down. "My guess is Serena wanted a chance to plead with Max to leave whoever he was with and come home. She tried, he turned her

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

down—maybe he became abusive with Dave the way he used to, there was a fight, and Dave killed him."

"We can't be sure what happened." Peter switched on the headlights. "If that's what did, do you care?"

"I feel as though I should," Carrie said. "But I don't."

Brother and sister were silent for miles. Then, approaching the Baytown exit from 401, Peter said, "One good thing out of all this."

"What's that?"

"We have what we need to make Dave leave you and Ted alone."

Dave Shorvil loved to serve beer—loading a tray with a dozen glasses of draft, swinging away from the bar, cruising between tables, answering signals, setting down glasses for men with a huge thirst on a hot summer night, making change with one hand, pocketing his tips. The time went fast. He downed a glass or two himself, keeping one going in the alcove by the door.

About once a week, an argument would start. If it got out of control, if his command to keep it civil failed to do the trick, then it was satisfying to put down the tray and wade in, grabbing a shoulder and the seat of somebody's pants and running the man out the door onto Front Street. But what was really fine was when the man tried to take him on. Shorvil loved active resistance. Then he was free to drive his fist into the sweating face, bringing on blood, inflicting some pain. From someplace deep inside him came the satisfaction of getting revenge, of paying back two for one. Sometimes they had to stop him when he put the man down and was drawing back his boot.

"You look pleased with yourself, Dave."

It was Carrie. Dave was helping out in the Ladies' Beverage Room tonight and here was his sister at a small table with his brother Peter.

"That's because I'm nearly finished. You want a beer?" He put the last two glasses from his tray onto their table. "On the house."

"We want to talk to you," Peter said.

"Sounds official." Their eyes met and the brothers became formal. "I'm closing this place in ten minutes," Dave told them and went off.

Everybody left except Carrie and Peter. There was a spasm of hard labor as chairs were heaved onto tables, ready for the cleaner to come in later with mop and bucket. Dave returned minus his apron and kicked away the wedge that held the front door open.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Then, as the door creaked shut, he came and sat down, swinging his leg over the back of the chair. There was more of him at the table than the two of them together.

"It's your deal," he said.

"We took a long drive today," Peter said. "Montreal and back."

"What was that in aid of?"

"We went to the boarding house where Father used to stay," Carrie said. "The woman there remembers all about him."

"I'm not surprised," Dave said. "The old man was probably making it with her."

Peter went on, "She remembers you coming there in a taxi. And taking Max away. He never came back."

"He couldn't." Apart from punching people, Dave enjoyed devastating them with information. "I killed him."

"We already figured that as a strong possibility," the younger brother said, "in case you're expecting us to fall through the floor."

"I told him he was a slime for leaving his wife. For abandoning his kids. I reminded him of all the times he laid his hands on me. Then I gave him an invitation to try it again." Dave grinned. "He took me up on it. Hit me a couple of good ones. So I went after him."

"What was Mother doing during all this?" Peter asked quietly.

"How should I know? Drinking beer in Baytown." Dave coughed. "One thing I admired about Mum and Dad was the way they used to get drunk together. Then he went away and she had to drink it all herself."

"We know where Mother was," Carrie said. "Estelle Durand told us. She was there with you in the motel."

"So why are you talking to me if you know everything?"

Peter said, "Because we want you to leave Carrie alone. Don't bother her and Ted Berriman."

"I'm trying to save her from that useless wimp."

"It's none of your business," Carrie said.

"If you keep interfering," Peter said, "I'll give Ted a story for his Baytown True Crime series. About the waiter from the Coronet Hotel who went to Montreal and murdered his father. And almost got away with it."

Dave brought the flat of his hand down on the marble table—the sound of meat hitting a butcher's block. "Ted could never use the story."

"Why not?" said Peter.

"Because it isn't true. I didn't kill Max. Mother did . . ."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They drove in Peter's car to the house on Station Street. Dave had a bottle of whiskey in the kitchen cupboard. As he poured drinks for himself and his brother, Carrie said, "On top of the beer?"

"Beer makes a good base," Dave said. He sat at the head of the table in Max's chair, the big one with the wooden arms. Carrie was in her place with her back almost against the stove. Peter's back was to the window where the icicles hung down outside in winter.

"Tell us exactly what Mother did," Peter said. "See if we believe you."

"She was waiting at the motel," Dave began. "She was looking good. She'd laid off the booze for a while and she had that nervous edge, you know the way she got? I went to the boarding house and brought Max back with me. He was surprised when I showed up. But by the time we got to the motel, he was ready to play. Serena tried to control herself, but she lost it."

"What happened?" Carrie shifted the bottle, but Dave took hold of it and topped up the two glasses.

"She started out saying the family needed him home. He wanted to know what about his needs? It fell apart from there. When I got involved was when she went for him and grabbed hold of his shirt. He put his hand in her face like she was some kind of floating garbage and shoved her away. I stepped in and landed him one. It broke his nose. Peter—Carrie—it felt so good! His nose was bent to one side with the blood pouring down across his mouth. And his eyes were like effing saucers. I had to do it again. I timed a beauty, right on his chin, and he went down like all his strings were cut."

Carrie rose from the table. "We don't need the details." She felt excited and angry.

"When I saw he wasn't getting up, we lifted him onto the bed. He was out, but he was breathing. See, I didn't want to kill him. We tried cold water on his face. I sponged him with a wet towel. But his eyes never flickered. So I knew it was emergency time and I went to get the car and bring it to the door—we were going to load him across the back seat and drive him up the hill to the Royal Vic."

"You should have called an ambulance," Carrie said.

"Let him finish," Peter told her. He was drinking slowly, as if he had to finish his medicine.

"When I backed up the car and went inside the room, it was different. You could feel it. Serena wasn't sitting on the bed where I left her. She was in the chair with her eyes closed. Max was still lying on his back. But there was a pillow covering his face. You

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

could see where she'd pressed down on it. I took it away, but he was no longer breathing."

Nobody said anything for a while. The neck of the bottle clinked once again on both glasses, a little for Peter, a lot for Dave. "What did you do with Dad's body?" Peter asked.

"That was my best move," Dave said. "The news in Montreal that week was all about some crazy people who burned a derelict in an alley. Some old drunk asleep behind a building and they dumped kerosene on him and set him on fire. That's what I did."

The front door slammed as Carrie went outside.

"I found a hardware store and bought a tin of kerosene. I waited till dark. Then I loaded him in the trunk and drove to the part of town where the first body was found. I took away all his ID. I put him against a brick wall, doused him with the kerosene, and touched a match to him. The papers treated it like a repeat by the same people."

"How long have you been crazy, Dave?"

"What's the big deal? It didn't matter to Max—he was dead. I did what I had to do to protect Serena. Same as now. Keeping Carrie from marrying that jerk, Berriman."

"You aren't getting it. You tried to help Mother. But she came home and drank herself to death. Carrie *wants* to be with Ted—and he wants to be with her."

"I don't believe Carrie knows what she wants." Dave swallowed the last of the whiskey. "And you don't know your own family. Haven't you noticed how we dish it out to each other?"

"I'm going home to bed."

"Our own mother. Nice lady? Put upon by rotten old Max? Turned into an alcoholic? Well, remember this, little brother—when she put that pillow over his face and bore down, she hadn't taken a drink in three days."

Peter went outside and found Carrie sitting on the stone bench near the driveway where Dave's pickup truck loomed, its belligerent bumper stickers illegible in the darkness. "When he sobers up, I think he'll agree to leave you and Ted alone."

"I'll believe it when it happens."

"Would you be willing to blow the whistle on him? I think I could. Tell the police what happened in Montreal."

"How could they prove anything years later?"

"They have ways."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dave, coming up behind them, said, "You're putting the heat on me, little brother. I don't like that."

Carrie felt something snap. "This is enough! It doesn't stop!"

"It'll be all *right,*" Peter told her.

"Yes, because I'm leaving. Forget it—I don't need Ted Berriman or either of you." She began walking down the street. "You tried, Peter," she called back, "but please don't try any more! Not for me."

"I'll call you tomorrow," he said.

She turned under a streetlight. "I'll go to Montreal. Doctors there must need secretaries. Estelle Durand will help me."

The brothers were left sitting on the stone bench. "Nice going," Peter said.

"Drop it."

"I'm not sure I believe all that stuff about Mother. You probably killed Max. Anyway, she came home and climbed inside the bottle and died. And now you're driving Carrie out of town."

"She won't go."

"Why are you destroying this family, Dave?"

"You're the good guy and I'm the bad guy, is that it? I don't like it."

"You said that before. I don't care if you like it."

"Why don't you do something about it, then?"

"Because I can't!" Peter yelled.

His voice penetrated the dark street. A dog began barking three houses away. Embarrassed, he reined in. "You're bigger and stronger than I am, okay?"

Dave was amused. The situation was under his control. "Then we take care of it another way. Remember how we used to play chicken? Let's do it now. You in your shiny Chevy. Me in my old pickup. The road is deserted north of town."

Peter saw the good in this. The challenge would take them both off the hook. When it was over, after he pulled aside as usual and Dave raced through in triumph, they would be free to go home and sleep and talk again when they were sober.

"You're on," Peter said, and they got into their vehicles and drove out.

Dave's truck was in position, idling, when Peter arrived. He pulled alongside and spoke, peering up through the open window at his brother perched behind the wheel of the pickup, Dave heavy-eyed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and smiling. Peter had seen this expression before, when Dave was contemplating a woman.

"If you're tired, we don't have to do this."

"Stay here," Dave said. "I'll go down the half mile."

"I don't believe any of that about Mother."

"I knew you wouldn't. That's why I never told you."

"What really happened?"

"My whole life happened," Dave said. He pulled away slowly, going through the gears as he picked up speed, leaving his young brother with red taillights to look at, getting smaller.

The lights disappeared, then became the broad sweep of headlights as the truck turned around. The pickup waited a while as Peter held his car in neutral, tapping the accelerator now and then because it wanted to stall, then the lights down the highway dipped and bobbed as Dave got under way. Peter eased the gear-shift into Drive and rolled forward. He stepped on the gas and came up quickly to forty. Dave seemed to be doing a lot more. There was only one risk in playing chicken. In avoiding the head-on collision, both cars might veer in the same direction. But with Dave, Peter knew he had nothing to fear. Dave was not going to quit.

The truck headlights were coming on fast. Then Dave did something he had never done before in their contests as teenagers. He switched the truck's headlights to high-beam. Peter was nearly blinded by the glare. He swung right, struggling to maintain control as the Chevy's tires touched the gravel shoulder.

The truck raced on down the highway. It didn't brake to a stop. It didn't go into reverse and back up at speed so that Dave could show his triumphant face at the window. Dave's foot must have been on the floor, the old vehicle far surpassing its safe maximum speed. What happened next would never be determined. Either a tire hit a hole in the road or the driver deliberately did something with the steering wheel. As Peter watched, the truck left the road and took out a length of timber fence. It went end over end, headlights arcing through the darkness before they went out. The artificial light was replaced by sparks moments before the explosion and the fireball lit up the night.

Carrie kept her word. She moved to Montreal even though there was no longer any need for her to go. She found work as a ward secretary at Royal Victoria Hospital. It seemed at first to Peter that his deceased brother was getting his way with Carrie abandoning

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ted Berriman. Then the unexpected happened. Berriman received a response from CBC Montreal to an audition tape he had sent them and ended up taking the assignment they offered him. They were living together now at Estelle Durand's boarding house.

Peter's job at the A&P was going fine. The manager was training him in all kinds of things that suggested he would one day be asked to take over.

He never told anybody what the cop said after he walked back from the burned-out truck. Peter had been sitting in his car with the door open. It was dawn. The cop sounded apologetic. "That was some fire. We'd never know it was Dave in there if you hadn't told us."

Peter decided then to believe Dave's story about how he got rid of Max's body. Maybe someday he'd let Carrie in on the poetic justice.

On the day he was promoted manager, Peter took a lettering machine and made himself a new plastic badge. He threw the one with his proper name on it into a drawer. Then he pinned the new one on the lapel of his red jacket and went out into the store feeling edgy and impatient. It was probably the way his father and his big brother used to feel most of the time.

The new badge read, SHORTY.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* short story by

JULIAN SYMONS

"My Lucille," said Pierre, "she is beautiful but she does not have a chess brain." He pulled Lucille to him and held her close while kissing her lips, cheek, neck.

Barbara watched, cold-eyed. When they were back home she said to Robert, "What a disgusting little man, slobbering over his wife."

A wonderfully crafted and crafty story from Julian Symons, whose new novel, to be published this spring by Viking, is Death's Darkest Face . . .

THE CONJURING TRICK

by JULIAN SYMONS

A love affair may be like a conjuring trick. It is not always what it seems to be.

From the beginning, Robert Banister opposed the move to Marlborough Court from the house in Quinton Close. There was much more space in the house, he said, a garden at the back in which to sit out on sunny evenings, friendly neighbors. It was a community. To this Barbara responded that there was no comparison between the house and the apartment. If you lived in Quinton Close you stamped yourself as suburban and second-rate. Marlborough Court was in the city center, an address that would impress people, a place where Robert could invite one of the Multiplex directors to dinner without the humiliation of having to explain where they lived and how to get there.

She added a clincher: "We might get on better." It was true that they snapped at each other, were annoyed by trivialities, seemed to

© 1990 by Julian Symons.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have little in common. They had been married four years, and after the first had occupied separate beds.

So they moved to Marlborough Court, an E-shaped block of luxury flats, with a restaurant, an indoor swimming pool, and, of course, a porter and caretaker. Three apartments were vacant, but Barbara particularly liked one on the sixth floor that faced inwards. It had a balcony with a delicate, though rather flimsy wrought-iron railing. It was protected from the wind, and so would be just as good as Quinton Close for sitting out on sunny evenings. There was a living room with a sliding door opening onto the balcony, their bedroom, a kitchen with a breakfast bar, and a bathroom in which all the fitments were gold-plated. And that was all. The space was less than half of that in Quinton Close and it cost twice as much. When Robert pointed this out, Barbara replied that he was unable to recognize anything first class when he saw it. Within a week they were bickering as much as ever.

"It's like living in a rabbit hutch."

"With less than half the work for me, do you ever think of that?"

"I was stuck for twenty minutes in traffic this morning, getting to the office. From the house there were never any traffic jams."

"But if we wanted to go to the cinema, what then? I remember driving round and round to find a parking space. Now we can walk."

Such squabbling can be affectionate, but theirs had an unpleasant edge to it, as if each was trying to put the other down. In fact, they rarely went to the cinema, and didn't watch much television. In the evening, Robert listened to classical music—Brahms, Beethoven, and Mahler, in particular. Barbara was a member of a bridge club and spent two or three evenings a week there. Sometimes Robert brought work home with him. He was an accountant at Multiplex, a firm with subsidiaries that sold everything from biscuits to bicycles. He had hoped at one time to become *the* accountant, but he was in his mid-thirties and further promotion seemed unlikely. Barbara was a few years younger and worked as a dental hygienist. Without her income, they could not have afforded to buy the lease of the Marlborough Court apartment. There were no children, because Barbara had said decisively that they could not afford them.

Robert didn't argue about it. Sometimes now he wondered why they had got married, although there had seemed nothing strange about it at the time. He had recently moved from a smaller firm to Multiplex at a considerable increase in salary, and he was tired of living alone and doing his own cooking. He had had a half hearted

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

affair with a secretary at the smaller firm and was relieved rather than upset when she told him she was going to marry one of the salesmen. Shortly afterward, he had met Barbara on a visit to the dentist, where she had cleaned his teeth and said he looked after them beautifully.

As she bent over him, masked face within inches of his own, body slightly pressed against his as her powerful hands scraped at tartar, vaguely erotic feelings stirred in him. Her features, the hygienic mask removed, were strong and regular, thick brows almost met across her forehead, her chin was strong where his was indeterminate. She wasn't beautiful, but might have been called handsome. Everything about her was powerful in a way that impressed him, especially those strong managing hands. He pretended to an interest in bridge, she feigned a liking for concerts, and within a few weeks they were married.

Robert's parents had died when he was young and he was an only child—Barbara had been abandoned by hers and brought up by foster parents appointed by the local council. They had a brief honeymoon in the south of France, bought the house in Quinton Close, and settled to a kind of domesticity. But Barbara didn't much like cooking and Robert was not good at talking to the neighbors who came occasionally to dinner, and such occasions almost ceased after the first year. Barbara kept the house scrupulously clean and painfully tidy, Robert bought and planted annuals in the tiny garden. But that, too, was over now they were in Marlborough Court.

Robert couldn't have said what he expected from marriage, and so was not disappointed. When he looked in the glass he saw a tall, gangling man with regular features slightly flawed by the indeterminate chin, a trim figure in no need of dieting, small well kept hands. He had never taken too much to drink, never looked at another woman after his marriage. If he had been asked whether he was happy, he would hardly have known how to answer, for he never asked himself such questions, any more than he took any interest in which political party governed the country, although he felt it a duty to vote at elections. Nor did it occur to him to wonder whether Barbara was happy, or to concern himself that at night they stayed in their separate beds. He was aware that they didn't get on as well as they had in the first year, but then perhaps that was the way with all married couples. He realized she had some desire for a different, more luxurious or wealthier life and so didn't seriously resist the move from house to apartment, although he didn't like it.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Two weeks after they moved to Marlborough Court, he saw Lucille.

It was early evening. He was alone in the apartment because this was one of Barbara's bridge-club days, and he had taken a chair onto the balcony and was sipping the first of the two whisky-and-sodas he allowed himself after work while reading the evening paper. He glanced up from it, and saw a girl standing in the opposite window, naked from the waist up.

She had long, fair, almost golden hair, small beautiful breasts, and a look of childish innocence as she stared intently at something down in the street far below. As he watched, she stretched her arms upwards slowly, stroked one shoulder reflectively with the other hand, momentarily caressed a breast, smiled. Then she saw him and, still with the smile lingering on her lips, stepped back and out of sight.

His first reaction was to retreat from the balcony and close the sliding window. He felt ashamed of intruding on the girl's privacy, was aware of having relished the sight of that stretched arm moving lovingly over the shoulder and the hand lingering on the breast. He was also aware of feeling emotions Barbara had never aroused. She had impressed him by the self-confidence that he knew he lacked, but this girl looked frail, vulnerable, yet in movement and manner sensual.

He couldn't have said just when he began to try to work out what apartment she occupied and who she might be. His apartment, Number 65, was on a prong of an inner side of the E, he had looked sideways to the right when seeing her, so the girl's apartment, or that of her parents, must be next door. He opened the door, looked across the thick dark-blue Wilton landing carpet, and saw 64 in gold numbers. She must be behind that door.

When Barbara returned, he asked if she knew the name of their neighbors and she said she had no idea, adding surprise that he was interested.

He was disturbed to find that the vision of the girl remained with him, distracting him from some dull but complicated calculations about the financial position of a small company Multiplex thought of acquiring. He found himself looking out for her in the lift, and asked the porter the name of the occupants of Number 64, saying he thought he had recognized one of them as an acquaintance.

"That'd be Mr. Delaporte. Can't be him, though—he's away on business."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Robert mumbled that he must have been mistaken, the name was not Delaporte. The porter, young and curly-haired, looked at him a little oddly, and he realized he could have seen the name on the entry phone outside the entrance.

He saw her again a little less than a week later. He was coming back from the office and saw her at the entrance, carrying a bag containing several parcels. She put it down to open the entrance door and two small parcels spilled onto the pavement. He picked them up. She thanked him, speaking in slightly accented English. They got into the lift together, and at the sixth floor he realized he still had hold of the parcels. At her door she hesitated, then said, "Please come in."

They were in a large hall and passage, with several doors leading off it, then in a sitting room much larger than the Banisters', with several pictures on the walls. He had the parcels in his arms.

"Put them—oh, we will put them in Pierre's study, he is away."

She led the way to a room as big as their bedroom, with a desk, easy chairs, more pictures. Robert had known theirs was one of the smaller apartments, but as he looked at the striped sofa in the sitting room, the elaborate flower arrangement, the pieces of china displayed in alcoves—Dresden or Meissen, perhaps, but obviously valuable—he realized fully that life in Marlborough Court was something to which he and Barbara should not have aspired. He should have said so, have said it firmly.

But now the girl was telling him to sit down, offering a cigarette, asking if he would like a drink. He said something about being her neighbor.

"I know. You saw me the other day." He was overwhelmed with confusion, said he was sorry. "Why should you be? I am stupid, I think here I am high up, nobody can see, but of course it isn't so. Anyway, what does it matter? My name is Lucille Delaporte. Chin chin." She had poured him a whisky-and-soda, now raised her glass, and they drank together. He asked, half question and half statement, if her father was away. She laughed.

"Pierre is away, yes, but he is not my father, he is my husband."

That made him more confused. He didn't know what to say, although looking at her now more closely, hair piled on top of her head instead of hanging loose, he realized she was not a girl but a young woman, although an impression of childishness and physical frailty remained. He remembered the sight of those girlish breasts, felt embarrassed, looked away, and saw in a corner of the room a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

brass-legged table with chessmen laid out on top. She followed his gaze.

"You like to play chess? I play with Pierre, but he beats me, he is so good." They went over to look at it. He picked up two of the chessmen, and saw that they were real ivory and ebony.

"You will like to have a game sometime? But I tell you, I am not good. Perhaps you play Pierre when he comes back. He travels a lot. He is in France now or perhaps in Germany—he deals in art and also in jewelry. He has a gallery here—the Deux Arts, do you know it?" He had seen the gallery, which was in the city's most fashionable street. "He travels to buy and sell things. He has a gallery also in Cologne, he says that is the great European center for art. We have an apartment there in Cologne, but I like it here, except when he is away it is a little boring. I sometimes travel with him, but—" she shrugged "—he is always so busy, and I have nothing to do."

He finished his drink and said he must go. She came to the door and said now he knew who she was and where she lived, they were neighbors, perhaps one day they could have a game of chess.

He didn't mention the meeting to Barbara. To do so, he told himself, would have meant talking about the evident wealth of the Delaportes and saying how foolish they were to have come to Marlborough Court. That was no good, they were stuck with it now and could afford it—just. But he found himself looking at Barbara's scowling handsomeness, comparing it with Lucille's delicacy and fragility, and remembering that glimpse of her half naked. He longed to see her again but was too shy to telephone, or knock on the door of Number 64. One day he went into the Deux Arts Gallery, and was astonished by the prices asked for pictures which seemed to him mostly splodges of paint laid on very thick in vivid colors. The supercilious young man who gave him the price list said they were a new school of Latin American painters coming into fashion. The gallery also had a collection of modern jewelry, French and Italian, and again the prices seemed to him immense.

Ten days elapsed. He had been working late at the office. When he got home Barbara said, "The people next door telephoned and asked us for dinner tomorrow. She said she'd met you. You never told me." She barely listened to his explanation and seemed more interested in the fact that both the Delaportes had undergone teeth scraping at her hands.

Pierre Delaporte was a surprise to Robert. He was very small, a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

little smiling man who wore gold-rimmed spectacles hanging on a chain. He lifted these spectacles to look at things and people, perched them on his nose, then dropped them again so that they hung on his chest. The surprise was his age. Although lively in his movements, he was obviously between fifty and sixty years old, while Lucille could be no more than twenty-five.

They drank champagne and Pierre talked about his latest trip, which had taken him to five European countries. "I bought only three paintings. That was in Copenhagen, a young Danish artist, he is going to be important. Lucille tells me you play chess. She says also you are very kind, you carry her parcels. We have a game one day, what do you say?" Robert said he'd like that, and agreed to come in for a game at the weekend. "My Lucille, she is beautiful but she does not have a chess brain." He pulled Lucille to him and held her close while kissing her lips, cheek, neck.

Barbara watched, cold-eyed. When they were back home she said, "What a disgusting little man, slobbering over his wife." Robert said he was exuberant. "Is that what you call it?"

He asked what she thought of the apartment, and she replied that it was very fancy. "They have lots of money," he said. "He has another flat in Cologne."

"She told you that, did she?" Her dark intense gaze was bent on him. "I could see the way she looked at you."

Had she looked at him in a particular way? The idea had not occurred to him, and he found it attractive.

When he went round to play chess, Lucille watched them for a little, then sat on a sofa with her legs curled under her, reading a book, went onto the balcony, poured drinks for them, returned to the sofa. He was disturbed by her presence when for a moment she stood near to him, and distracted by it even when she was on the sofa.

Delaporte made his moves quickly, not always with much thought. After an hour, he threw up his hands in surrender, let the little gold glasses drop to his chest. "You are too good, my friend—tonight, at least. You give me my revenge another time. But it will have to wait—we fly to New York next Wednesday."

He said inanely to Lucille that she was going, too, and she screwed up her face. "Pierre says I must, he wants me. I do not like the city, it is so noisy, so busy."

"I give a little party there, my wife must be my hostess, that is her place, her job," Pierre said, laughing. Still laughing, he put out finger and thumb and pulled at the lobe of her ear—as, Robert

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

remembered, Napoleon had tweaked the ears of his favorite soldiers. Her reaction was not that of Napoleon's young men. She cried out that he was hurting her and ran out of the room. Pierre shook his head. "Women, they like to live well, wear nice clothes, spend money. Sometimes they must be reminded they have duties."

They had drinks, ate bits of things in pastry cases. Lucille was lively, even flirtatious. Pierre laughed and joked, yet there seemed to Robert something odd in their relationship, a passion that remained unexpressed.

He tried to explain what he felt to Barbara, who said he was imagining things. He also mentioned the prices of the pictures and jewelry at the Deux Arts, and that was perhaps what prompted her to remember the star cufflinks. They were gold links with tiny rubies and diamonds inlaid in the shape of a star, the only heirloom that had come to him from his father. He thought them rather showy and wore them only on occasions like the twice-yearly office dinner dance. She suggested he should ask Pierre how much they were worth, and was irritated when he said he would never sell them.

"Suppose they're worth a lot of money, two or three times as much as you expect?" she said. "Anyway, I'm not saying we should sell them, only find out how much they're worth." He shook his head. "You're so feeble. Don't you see it might be a way of getting to know them better, they're the kind of people who might be helpful."

"How?"

"How do I know? It was to meet people like them that we came here, wasn't it?"

"I thought we came here because we might get on better. That doesn't seem to be happening."

She stared at him, then said she was sorry.

That night, for the first time in weeks, she came to his bed.

When he learned from the curly-haired porter that the Delaportes had returned from their trip, he telephoned. Lucille answered, and said Pierre had gone away again for a couple of days, but, yes, she would love to come in for a drink.

She came, exclaimed at the prettiness of this and the cleverness of that in their living room, went out to the balcony and said the view was nicer than that from their apartment that looked the other way (a quick glance at Robert when she said that, a reminder of what he had seen). New York was always exciting and Pierre had done some business, but really she did not like it. She spoke mostly

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to Robert, as if she knew he would be a sympathetic listener, and Barbara said little, sitting with her heavy brows drawn together in a frown. He was surprised when she produced the little red morocco box containing the cufflinks and opened it.

Lucille exclaimed with pleasure and said she had seen nothing like them. He found himself tongue-tied, and it was Barbara who asked if Pierre would say what he thought they might be worth.

"Of course, he will be pleased. You would like him to make an offer for them?"

Robert broke in before Barbara could speak, to say no, all they wanted was that he should value them, so that they would know their worth for insurance purposes.

When Lucille had gone, he asked why Barbara hadn't spoken to him before showing the links. She glared at him and said she knew if it had been left to him he would have done nothing about it. They nagged at each other for half an hour.

In bed that night he compared Barbara with Lucille and wondered why he had married her. At breakfast next morning they hardly spoke. It was a relief to get to the office and bury himself in work.

The call came in the afternoon. When he lifted the telephone and heard Lucille's voice, he could hardly believe it. Nor had he heard her like this, obviously distressed, the words jumbled together, foreign accent pronounced, as she said she must see him. What about? She could not say on the telephone, but she must see him.

He rang the bell and she opened the door, her face anguished, took him into the big room with its china, ornaments, and pictures, and held out to him with a dramatic gesture the morocco box. He opened it and saw one cufflink. He stared at her.

"What happened?"

"I do not know." Her hands were clasped tightly together. "I take them out, look at them, they are so pretty—not pretty, beautiful. I put them on the dressing table. Then I am trying on clothes, I put on a shirt with holes so you can use buttons or links, I put your links in them to try. They are charming. I come in here, do this, do that, then I see one is not there any more. I am so sorry, so very sorry." She began to cry.

It is not easy to cry without looking ugly, but she seemed to him just as beautiful crying as smiling. She also looked, as when he had first seen her, no more than sixteen years old. He put an arm round her, no more than that, and told her not to worry, it must be somewhere, they would look together and find it.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They searched the apartment, searched it thoroughly. They didn't find the cufflink.

When they were in the bedroom, both kneeling, looking under the bed, she began to giggle. It *was* funny, he saw that, two adults crawling over a bedroom floor looking for a cufflink. He began to laugh, too. Naturally—as it seemed, inevitably—she came into his arms, her face smudged with tears.

It was the first time he had been unfaithful to Barbara—which was the word he used to himself when he was back in their own little apartment and waiting for her to return. He felt ashamed. The most shameful thing was that he wanted to do it again, that when Lucille said she could see him tomorrow he had said yes. And that seemed possible, for next day was Wednesday, one of Barbara's bridge days.

The telephone call to him at the office on the following morning was hardly more than a whisper down the line, a whisper in which she said again she must see him.

"You've found it?"

She seemed not to hear the question, but asked him to meet her at lunchtime at the entrance to the Royal Arcade, which contained several of the city's most expensive shops. When he got there, she stood waiting. He asked again if she had found the cufflink. She shook her head, her expression that of a mischievous child.

"Then what are we doing here?"

She answered with another question. "You have what they call a boiled shirt?"

"A dress shirt, yes, but why do you ask?"

She took his hand, led him into the Arcade, entered a shop that had in the window only a rope of pearls, a diamond pendant, and an emerald necklace, all unpriced. Inside, a man in frock coat and wing collar bowed, smiled, laid reverentially on a bed of black velvet three dress studs. In each of them a diamond glittered.

"What do you think? You like?"

He said they were beautiful, and before he could go on to the reasons why he could not accept them she had nodded to the frock coat, he was putting them into a little red box that looked identical to the one that held his cufflinks, she was saying they could be charged to Mrs. Delaporte, and they were out of the shop.

"I have been careless, I lose something, I could not find cufflinks so I give a little present. There is no more to be said." That was her

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

reply to his stumbling objections, and when he tried to pursue them she said, "Please, you must take them. If you don't, I shall not forgive myself."

What happened after that again seemed inevitable. The curly-haired porter saw them as they walked through the entrance hall together and got into the lift. When it stopped at the sixth floor, Robert went without question into that grand apartment and there made love. He got back to the office very late, and it seemed to him that his secretary looked at him strangely. He found it impossible to concentrate on work, told her he had a bad headache, and left early.

He put the diamond studs into a drawer that he kept locked, and when Barbara came home she found him lying on the bed, staring at the ceiling. He told her he felt ill, and in a way that was true. The images of their lovemaking rose up before him and were played over and over in his mind, a tape endlessly repeated. He was repelled by what he had done, yet longed to see Lucille again.

For three days, he heard nothing from her. Returning home on another evening before Barbara, he stood out on the balcony for several minutes, as if by doing so he could rewind the tape back to the beginning, the vision of the golden-haired girl looking down into the street. But the French windows of the Delaporte apartment remained closed. Each morning and evening, going to and from the office, he looked at the blue door with its gold number, unsuccessfully willing it to open.

After those three days, he could bear it no longer and rang her from the office. There was a moment of silence when she heard him, then she said brightly, "Hallo, how are you? Did you want to speak to Pierre? He is here." Then Delaporte was on the line saying something about his revenge at chess, and also that Lucille had complained of boredom, they were having a small party in a week's time and hoped he and Barbara would come. Robert said they would be delighted and put down the telephone with a feeling of overwhelming relief. Why had it not occurred to him that Pierre might have come home?

Who would be at the party? Should they after all go to it? Robert had a sudden feeling of revulsion, mixed with an unidentifiable fear. He had no particular wish to see Pierre again or to meet Pierre's friends. His only interest was in Lucille. And the fear, what did that come from? Perhaps from worry that the Delaportes' friends would be immensely sophisticated and talk about things in a way that left

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

him looking and sounding foolish. Barbara became angry when he said something of this. Her eyes sparkled with a blend of indignation and contempt. She repeated those remarks about meeting people who might be helpful and said she didn't want to work for a dentist all her life.

So they went, and Robert soon saw that he need not have worried about being overawed. The other guests were a curious mixture, including the supercilious young man from the Deux Arts and a couple of other faces he recognized as residents of Marlborough Court. But there was also a girl with yellow-and-green hair that stood up in spikes and another who wore a halter and shorts that showed her navel, a Chinese wearing what looked like battle fatigues, a red-haired, loud-voiced American and his equally noisy wife, and a couple of swarthy little men who talked mostly to each other. Waiters from the restaurant brought around things on toast and smoked salmon done up in rolls. Robert spoke to one of the little men, who said his name was Arminias and asked if Robert did business with Pierre. He laughed when he heard that Robert lived in the next apartment, and laughed again as he said he was a business associate.

"You deal in pictures?"

Arminias laughed again. "I am a picture framer, I choose the frame, prepare the picture. I am an important man. My friend Julio, he is important, too." He indicated the other little man.

At that moment, Pierre came over, took Arminias away, and spoke earnestly to him, perhaps rebuking him for levity. Soon afterward, Arminias spoke to Julio and they both left. Barbara was talking to the girl with spike hair. And Lucille? She had greeted him with a smile and a handshake when they arrived, but since then had not spoken to him, hardly looked at him. Yet what did he expect?

Delaporte asked if he was enjoying himself, clapped him on the shoulder before he could reply, and said they would play chess next week. Robert joined a couple on the balcony he recognized as local residents and learned that the man was the managing director of a building firm, and had recently bought a picture from Pierre. What did Robert do? The managing director's interest diminished when he learned that Robert was no more than an accountant at Multiplex. He half turned his back and began to talk to somebody else. Would that be turning a cold shoulder, Robert wondered as he reentered the room. Most of the guests had left—it was time they, too, were

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gone. He tried to catch Barbara's eye, but failed. The girl with the spikes had her full attention.

Now the red-haired American and his wife were going, and Pierre left the room with them, the three deep in conversation, and Lucille came over smiling, two wine glasses in her hand. She gave him one, raised hers, and said, "Chin chin."

He drank, and had time to remark that the drink was not his usual whisky before she took him by the hand. Then they were in the bedroom, still holding the glasses. She drained hers, gestured to him to do the same, and he did so. She took the glass from him, put it on a table, then was in his arms, shrugging off her dress, pulling at his clothes, urging him toward the bed. He tried to protest, to say this was madness, but she was murmuring something about Pierre being out for a while and they had time, and he gave way to her, gave way completely, pulling her down on the bed with an urgency equal to her own.

Now things were spinning and wheeling, he wasn't sure of place or time but was aware of himself as a different, more powerful person, so that when he felt a hand on his shoulder, rolled over and away from Lucille and saw Pierre's face purplish with anger and, as it seemed, enlarged, he was not alarmed but inclined to laugh. He was conscious of Pierre hitting him, and although the blows for some reason did not hurt he knew they should be resisted, and his strength was as the strength of ten as he got hold of Pierre and shook him to try to bring the little man to his senses.

After that, everything became out of proportion—the size of the room expanded so that the door seemed immensely distant, then as he crawled toward it along the carpet (he was on all fours, he couldn't bother to work out why) wall and door suddenly bulked up before him.

He hit his head on the wall and said, "Knock knock," hoping others would enjoy the joke. All the while there was sound, cries that seemed to come from a distance, Lucille's face alarmed and Barbara's frowning, unintelligible words coming from her. Then there was a need for air, the window and balcony a long way away, a day's crawl perhaps, but supposing you didn't run but leapt like a kangaroo, how long then?

Out of the door, along an endless passage, somebody was calling out his name and then there was a thud, a kangaroo kick at the back of his head. Unfair, he thought. It was the last thing he remembered from that scene . . .

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What followed was a long nightmare, from which he constantly expected to wake and find himself in his office at Multiplex, papers round him, calculator on the desk, telephones to hand, secretary within call. But that vision was of a past reality. In the nightmare there were endless interrogations by polite, wooden-faced policemen. Then came conversations with an equally wooden-faced and equally polite solicitor who was acting for him and kept saying they must get his story straight, even though he repeatedly said he had no story.

There was a cell and then the prison hospital—there were all sorts of tests that involved metal bands put round his head and rubber ones round his arms. There was a series of talks with a pleasant, smiling psychiatrist who seemed to think there was no such thing as sanity, everybody was aberrant in one way or another. "What has all this to do with me?" he asked. "I'm simply an ordinary businessman who went to a party, was given an odd drink, and have no recollection of what happened afterward." He corrected himself. "I remember Pierre hitting me, and I shook him because he was so angry—I was trying to make him calm down."

"You shook him? You don't remember a fight or a struggle? In the bedroom? Or later in the living room?"

"I only shook him. That was in the bedroom."

The psychiatrist smiled, and made notes.

Everything was explained by his solicitor, and by Barbara, who came twice to see him and said she was doing her best. But what they said made no sense, he didn't remember the things he was supposed to have done. He listened with wonder as he sat in the dock while the prosecuting counsel, a man as urbanely pleasant as the psychiatrist, unfolded what he said was the story of a commonplace adulterous love affair that was not connected with the police investigation of Pierre Delaporte.

"You will hear police evidence that Delaporte had a perfectly genuine business as a fine art dealer, which he used as cover for smuggling drugs into and out of this country, and that his fine art business was not only a cover but positively a means of smuggling the drugs, which were hidden in hollowed-out cavities in the specially made picture frames. The police were aware of Delaporte's activities, but delayed making arrests at the request of their European colleagues. I understand many of these arrests have now been made.

"It was necessary that you should know this background because

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it explains the presence of drugs at the party where Delaporte died, but I must now tell you that his drug-running activities had no connection with his death. It is the prosecution case that this is a simple matter of infatuation between an impressionable man and a beautiful young woman whose husband was away a good deal of the time. The infatuation was, as you will hear, on both sides. It was a short, stormy love affair that had a fatal ending."

That fatal ending was described by the police witnesses who had found Pierre Delaporte's body on the ground eighty feet below the balcony from which he had fallen or been pushed. The flimsy balcony rail was badly twisted, presumably by the pressure of a body. Delaporte had been dead when the ambulance arrived, and beside him was a diamond-and-ruby cufflink which had presumably fallen from the dead man's hand.

Among the parade of witnesses that followed were faces barely remembered by Robert, faces that seemed to belong to another life. Here was the girl with yellow-and-green hair to say Pierre Delaporte had been her supplier for drugs, and that some people had taken them at the party. And there was one of the waiters who had seen Lucille and Robert go into the bedroom. When Mr. Delaporte returned, he had looked for his wife, entered the bedroom, there had been shouts and screams. The waiter had gone in.

"What did you see?"

"First Mr. Delaporte was punching Mr. Banister. Then I don't know what you'd say—Mr. Banister seemed to go crazy, he got hold of Mr. Delaporte by the throat like he was trying to strangle him. I tried to pull him off and couldn't, so I hit him on the head with some big brass ornament I picked up and he just kind of collapsed on the floor. Mr. Delaporte, he was gasping for breath and then feeling his neck. He said something about settling this here and now and she said—"

" 'She' being Mrs. Delaporte?"

"Right. Mrs. Delaporte, she said if they were going to quarrel there was no need for everybody to know about it, and Delaporte went into the living room—he was still feeling his throat and his face was a funny color—and said the party was over. There were only three or four guests still there, and they left straight away. So then Johnny, the other waiter, and me, we started to clear up, but he said we should leave it and get out. So we did."

"When you left, only Mr. and Mrs. Delaporte and Mr. and Mrs. Banister remained?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Right. Mr. Delaporte was still feeling his neck and wiping his face. The two ladies, they were standing in the middle of the living room."

"And Mr. Banister? Was he still in the bedroom?"

"No—just as I left, he came into the living room. Didn't do or say anything, just stood."

"What was your impression of him?"

"I'd say he was stoned out of his mind."

That was the waiter, Frank. Then there was the curly-haired porter, to tell them that Mr. Banister had asked who lived in Number 64 and that he had come in with Mrs. Delaporte, laughing and joking. There was the frock-coated wing-collared salesman to speak of the purchase of the diamond dress studs, which proved to have been extremely expensive.

And then came Lucille. There was an appreciative murmur in court when she stepped into the witness box, wearing a plain black dress with a white collar, looking very young, frail, and beautiful. The prosecuting counsel led her through her story with almost old-world gallantry, dropping his voice a little at what might be thought delicate moments.

Yes, Lucille said, she had known Pierre Delaporte for only six weeks before they married, and that was just two years ago. She knew only that he was a respected art dealer, nothing of any drug-running, although they smoked pot together sometimes, and she had once tried cocaine. And yes, it had been a happy marriage, Pierre was so dynamic—except that she did not like traveling and so usually stayed in England, which she loved. But at times she was a little lonely.

Up to this point she had spoken clearly, but she lowered her head and at times became barely audible as she told how she had met her neighbor Robert Banister and found him so charming, so considerate, all the things Pierre was not.

"I loved Pierre, but Robert was so different." She lifted her head now and said defiantly, "So English."

"You became his mistress."

The reply was whispered. "Yes."

She went on to tell the story of the lost diamond-and-ruby cufflink. "I was so devastated, so ashamed I am so careless, I feel I must make it up somehow. So we go together to this shop, I give him these studs. It is a way of saying sorry to my lover, that is all."

"This was a valuable present."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

She shrugged.

"You were buying something for your lover with your husband's money, did that occur to you?"

Her head lowered again, Lucille muttered, "I did not think. It was very wrong, but I did not think."

And then Pierre had found the missing cufflink, in the bedroom, under her dressing table. He had questioned her about it. He was angry and did not believe her when she said it must have been dropped by one of the cleaners and was of no value. He could see it was valuable. This had happened an hour before the party, and so at the party she had thought she would not talk to Robert, but when Pierre had taken some guests out to say goodbye she had brought over his glass, just to say hello. Robert had said he must talk to her alone, they had gone into the bedroom, he had kissed her and started to make love, then Pierre had come in, had been furious, they fought—

"Was Robert Banister his normal self at this time?"

She shook her head violently. "Not at all. He was so strange—I had never seen him like that. I thought he would choke Pierre to death."

"And then the waiter knocked him out. What did you do after that?"

"We are in the living room. Pierre says the party is over and people go away. Pierre, he is still angry and says we will settle things, but Barbara is crying, she is hysterical. So I take her to the bathroom and say I am sorry, it is all my fault."

"When your husband said he would settle things, was Robert Banister in the room?"

"Yes, he had come in and was standing by the door. He is still strange, I do not think he knows what he is doing."

"And what do you think your husband meant by that phrase about settling things?"

Lucille shook her head. In the end her reply was a whisper. "I think he was going to fight again with Robert." Still in a voice hardly raised above a whisper, she said she had still been in the bathroom trying to comfort Barbara when she had heard shouts, a cry, then a crash. She had gone in the living room to find Robert semiconscious just beside the French window, and no sign of Pierre. Then she had gone to the balcony.

Robert's counsel was very small, superficially like Pierre in appearance, so that he felt at times disconcertingly as if he was being

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

represented by the dead man. The little man's manner was aggressive, and in wig and gown he resembled a yapping French poodle. He was pertinacious in cross-examining Lucille, snapping away particularly at what she said and did before going into the bedroom.

"You say it was my client's glass you brought over. How do you know that?"

"I saw him put it down. I asked the waiter to refill it, then took it over to him. He drank some of it, and said he must talk to me alone."

"You know medical examination showed my client had taken LSD."

"I have been told, yes."

"And it was the first time he had taken any drug. He never took drugs with you?"

"Not with me. Whether he had taken any elsewhere, I do not know."

"I suggest you spiked the glass of wine with LSD, as a joke perhaps, to see what would happen."

She shook her head.

"And that it was not he but you who wanted to go into the bedroom. I suggest you made love to him, not he to you, because you wanted to see what would happen when your husband came back. It was a dull party and you thought you would liven it up, wasn't that the reason?"

To these questions, and others suggesting she found it amusing to have a lover, Lucille said "No" quietly, with lowered head. Robert found it unbearable that she should be so tormented and passed down a note: "Stop this line of questioning." The note was passed up to the French poodle, who ignored it, or at any rate continued with similar questions. A small quantity of some untraceable drug had been found in Pierre's body, and the poodle suggested both he and Lucille had been habitual users. This, too, she denied.

Afterward the poodle came with the solicitor to see Robert and said the cross-examination had gone well.

"Whatever happened, you knew nothing about it—you were the victim of some kind of stupid joke. And whatever happened was an accident. That's our case."

Robert said slowly and painfully, like a man learning to speak, "You shouldn't have said those things. When it's over, you see, Lucille and I will get married."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The poodle stared at him, did not comment. "I shan't be calling your wife. She was in the bathroom with Mrs. Delaporte when it happened, she couldn't say anything that would help. And I'm afraid she's bitter—I don't know what the other side might make of her."

Robert nodded, without interest.

"Now, about your own evidence—"

Robert took little interest in that, either. Carefully led by the poodle, he stumbled through his story, admitting he had fallen in love with Lucille but otherwise mentioning her as little as possible, saying he had never taken drugs, he was a peace-loving man not inclined to quarrel—when Pierre had found them in the bedroom, there had been no mention of the cufflink, and he had no recollection of what happened after being knocked unconscious.

The cross-examination that followed was no less deadly for being urbane. He talked about being "in love," prosecuting counsel said, but wasn't it a case rather of the seduction of a lonely young woman who had become infatuated with him, the extent of that infatuation being shown by the purchase of those valuable diamond studs? He had said nothing to his wife and had hidden the studs—didn't that indicate the sordidness of the affair? At the party he had been talking to two of the dead man's close collaborators, both now under arrest. Did he expect the jury to believe drugs were not mentioned? Had he perhaps said it might be fun to try something? Increasingly, as the questions flowed on, they seemed unreal, altogether unconnected with the life and personality of that Robert Banister, an accountant at Multiplex, who had unwisely moved from Quinton Close to Marlborough Court.

The judge's summing up, although equally urbane, was unfavorable to the defendant. Nobody could doubt that Pierre Delaporte's death came about as the result of a quarrel over the affections of a beautiful though perhaps rather bored young woman, the man on high said. The only question to be decided was whether it was a pure accident or the result of an attack by the defendant, in which case he would be guilty of manslaughter. The defendant had said the cufflink had not been mentioned, but the fact that it was found beside the body was proof enough that Delaporte was aware of his wife's unfaithfulness. He mentioned the respective sizes of the men and the marks on the dead man's neck caused by an apparent attempt at strangulation, and told the jury not to draw any conclusion

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

from the fact that the accused man's wife had not been called as a witness.

Juries, however, are not slow to make the assumption that a wife not called to give evidence in such a case can have nothing favorable to say of her husband. They took only ninety minutes to find Robert Banister guilty of manslaughter. The judge said that in view of his previously unblemished character, and some doubt about the means by which he obtained the drug he took and under whose influence he had acted, he was minded to be lenient. He passed a sentence of two years' imprisonment, of which eighteen months would be suspended. Since Robert had already been four months in prison before the trial, this meant he had only a few weeks to serve. They were the longest of his life, and during them he learned that Barbara was suing for divorce. He did not contest the case.

When he came out of prison, Robert changed his surname to Stair, moved to another part of the city, and set up as an accountant specializing in taxation matters. He wrote to Lucille at Marlborough Court, telling her he still loved her and asking if they could meet, but the letter was returned marked GONE AWAY, NO ADDRESS. A few months later, he proposed marriage to a widow who had come to him for help with her income-tax problems, and was accepted. They bought a house in Forest Gardens, a recently built estate that very much resembled Quinton Close, and settled there happily.

The two women who lived at the villa in Monaco bought with Pierre's money never talked about the past. They enjoyed, or Lucille enjoyed, the lazy life, the clothes they bought, and the trips they took together, the fact that there was never any need to worry about money or about men.

Lucille had loved Barbara from the moment that she looked up in the dentist's chair and saw that heavy, frowning face bent over her. It had begun then, when Barbara had asked abruptly whether she would like to meet again. And it was not only love she felt, but admiration for a will and intelligence much greater than her own.

For it had all been Barbara's idea and Barbara's plan, from the time Lucille learned the apartment next to theirs was vacant and said casually that it would be so much easier to spend time with each other if they were neighbors. Barbara had told her what to do, she had played her part perfectly (Barbara had said so), and now she was entirely happy. So she assured herself. Yet there were moments when she saw those heavy brows knitted and something like

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a scowl on the handsome face, moments when she remembered those powerful hands forcing little Pierre over the balcony while Robert lay semiconscious on the floor. In those moments she felt afraid.

DETECTIVERSE

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

by ELIZABETH L. HAWN

In her stately southern mansion,
By a table set for two,
Strangled with a linen napkin,
Lay Miss Polly Pettigrew.
Servants were away that morning,
So no one was there to see
Who had shared the fatal breakfast
And had killed Miss Polly P.

"A Yankee did it," said the sheriff,
"And there's only one around—
Boys, go get that New York fellow,
City slicker, name of Brown.
Had to be that Yankee scoundrel,
He's the only one who fits—
Ate his bacon, eggs, and biscuits,
But he didn't touch his grits."

© 1990 by Elizabeth L. Hawn.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CLASSIFIED MARKET

ELLERY QUEEN—published 13 times a year. CLASSIFIED AD rate is $3.20 per word—payable in advance—($48.00 minimum). Capitalized words 40¢ per word additional. To be

ADDITIONAL INCOME

$1000/Thousand Immediately Stuffing Envelopes. FREE Supplies. Rush Stamped, Addressed Envelope: Elda Enterprises, Division M2, 4 Fairview Lane, Palm Coast, Florida 32137.

AUTHOR'S SERVICE

LOOKING for a publisher? Learn how you can have your book published, promoted, distributed. Send for free booklet. HP-5, Vantage Press, 516 W. 34th St., New York, NY 10001.

AUTOMOBILES & MIDGET CARS

IS it true . . . Jeeps For $44 Through The Government? Call For Facts! 1-708-742-1142 Ext. 4674.

BOOKS & PERIODICALS

FREE LIST! Used Hardcover mystery and detective fiction. Dunn's Mysteries, Box 2544, Meriden, CT 06450.

WORLD'S largest mystery stock. Search Service. Free catalogues. Limited Editions. Aardvarks, 1013 San Domingo Road, Orlando, FL 32808.

MYSTERY FICTION. Free Catalogue. Write: Magna Mysteries, PO Box 5732, Virginia Beach, VA 23455.

READ "How to Write a Classified Ad That Pulls." Instructive booklet tells how to write an effective classified ad. Also includes certificates worth $5.00 toward a classified ad in any of our publications. For your copy send $3.25 (includes postage) to Davis Publications, Inc., Dept. CL 380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017.

ANNOTATED lists of new mysteries. Also used mystery catalog. Rue Morgue, 946 Pearl, Boulder, CO 80302.

SEND 25¢ for Large Listing of Mystery and Detective Books. Canford, Drawer 216E, Freeville, NY 13068.

BOOKS & PERIODICALS—Cont'd

FREE CATALOGUE of mysteries and thrillers. Write: Time and Again Books, 367 Main, North Andover, Mass. 01845.

PUBLISH YOUR BOOK! Join our successful authors. All subjects invited. Publicity, advertising, beautiful books. Send for fact-filled booklet and free manuscript report. Carlton Press, Dept. SMC, 11 West 32 Street, New York 10001.

100,000 science fiction and mystery paperbacks, magazines, hardcovers. Free catalogs! Pandora's, Box Z-54, Neche, ND 58265-0133.

FREE CATALOG. Used hardback mystery, crime and detective books. Steve Powell, Dept. DP, The Hideaway, Bar Harbor, ME 04609.

MYSTERY Addicts!! Free Catalogue!! Good, Inexpensive, Recycled Detective Fiction. Grave Matters, Box 32192-C, Cincinnati, Ohio 45232.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

STAY HOME! MAKE MONEY ADDRESSING ENVELOPES. VALUABLE GENUINE OFFER. 20¢. Write Lindco, 3636-DA Peterson Ave., Chicago, IL 60559.

VENDING MACHINES. No selling. Routes earn amazing profits. 32-Page Catalogue FREE. Parkway Corporation. 1930NO Greenspring Drive, Timonium, Maryland 21093.

MAKE $15,000 IN 30 DAYS! EASY! NO INVESTMENT. FREE DETAILS: FINANCIAL, BOX 1150-DP, FORT WASHINGTON, PA 19034.

READ BOOKS for pay! $100 a title. Write: PASE-JK3, 161 Lincolnway, North Aurora, IL 60542.

GOOD MONEY! Weekly! Processing Mail! Free Supplies, Postage! Bonuses! Start Immediately! Rush stamped envelope! Foodmaster-MDC, Burnt Hills, NY 12027-9983.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

included in the next issue please send order and remittance to I. M. Bozoki, Classified Ad Manager, DAVIS PUBLICATIONS, INC., 380 Lexington Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES—Cont'd

EARN Hundreds Weekly. Stuffing Envelopes. Proven Successful. No Experience Necessary. Start Immediately. New Era Enterprises, M., 1589 Albion, Rexdale, Ontario M9V 1B6. Enclose a long SASE.

VENDING ROUTES earn amazing profits! Snacks, games, all types! BUY WHOLESALE DIRECT GUARANTEED! 609-866-0440.

LET THE GOVERNMENT FINANCE your new or existing small business. Grants/loans to $500,000 yearly. Free recorded message: 707-448-0270. (JN5)

SELL Books By Mail! $50,000 Yearly! Free 80 Page Get Started Manual! Quality, Box 1305-PJ, Seaford, NY 11783.

HOME Import Mail Order Business. Start without capital. Free Report. Mellinger, Dept. A1733, Woodland Hills, California 91367.

BUY IT WHOLESALE

400,000 BARGAINS Below Wholesale! Many Free! Liquidations . . . Closeouts . . . Job Lots . . . Single Samples. Free Details. Worldwide Bargainhunters, Box 1409-IO, Holland MI 49422.

CLOSEOUTS! Discounts! Below wholesale! Liquidations! Freebies! All kinds! Information (Stamp): DDN, Box 20152-D, Ferndale, Michigan 48220.

CLOSEOUT MERCHANDISE

FIRST QUALITY CLOSEOUTS! Pants, shirts, socks, blouses, jeans—much more. Sold by the case. For resale only. Price $1.00. Beal Textiles, Lincolnton, NC 28092.

EDUCATION & INSTRUCTION

HIGH SCHOOL AT HOME, diploma awarded. Low tuition. Our 92nd year. Phone free anytime 1-800-228-5600, or write American School, Dept. 329, 850 E. 58th St., Chicago, IL 60637.

EDUCATION & INSTRUCTION—Cont'd

WITCHCRAFT Occult Miracle Power Secrets. Gavin and Yvonne Frost. Now accepting students. 1502-AN, New Bern, NC 28560.

FINANCIAL

VISA/MASTERCARD. NO SAVINGS REQUIRED. Bad credit no problem. Limits to $5,000.00. Personal and business loans. 1-904-221-7139 for application. 24 hours.

FOR INVENTORS

INVENTORS! Can you patent and profit from your idea? Call AMERICAN INVENTORS CORPORATION for free information. Over a decade of service. 1-800-338-5656. In Canada call (413) 568-3753.

GIFTS THAT PLEASE

A *gift sure to please*—ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE, published monthly. Send $19.50 for 13 issues (includes shipping & postage) to Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine, P.O. Box 7058, Red Oak, IA 51591.

INVENTIONS WANTED

PROTECT, PATENT AND DEVELOP, Your invention rights before sale. Registered Patent Agent and Licensed Professional Engineer. Send for FREE PATENT INFORMATION Every Inventor Should Have. Richard L. Miller, 12 Parkside Drive, Suite-I, Dix Hills, NY 11746. (516) 499-4343.

LOTTERIES & SWEEPSTAKES

"BIG-Money Sweepstakes" - How to enter and win!. . .$1 + Self- Addressed Stamped Envelope. CP Company, 11 Rushmore Ct., Sumter, SC 29154.

WIN the Lottery using numbers based on your biorhythms. For a sample chart and instructions send $1.00 to: LARAD Enterprises, Inc., P.O. Box 1149, Hammond, IN 46325-1149.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Classified Continued

MAILING LISTS

NEW NAMES! Only sold once! Computerized labels! Guaranteed deliverable! DCO: 1-800-992-9405 Visa/MC/AmEx.

HOTLINE MAILORDER BUYERS! Eager Opportunity Seekers, MLM Participants! Adhesive Labels. 200/$5; 500/$8; 1,000/$14; 2,000/$25; 5,000/$55; 10,000/$99; 20,000/$175; 50,000/$369. QUALITY LISTS, Box 1305-FL, Seaford, NY 11783. VISA/MC/COD. (800) 356-6392.

MONEYMAKING OPPORTUNITIES

GOOD MONEY! Weekly! Processing Mail! Free Supplies, Postage! Bonuses! Start Immediately! Rush stamped envelope! Foodmaster-DCM, Burnt Hills, NY 12027-9983.

"JANITORIAL BUSINESS MONEYMAKING SECRETS." *Free Report! Make $25,000-$100,000+* annually! MBM, Box 159D, Junction City, CA 96048.

READ "How To Write a Classified Ad That Pulls." Instructive booklet tells how to write an effective classified ad. Also includes certificate worth $5.00 toward a classified ad in any of our publications. For your copy send $3.25 (includes postage) to Davis Publications, Inc., Dept. CL, 380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017.

ADVERTISING and Publishing Franchise. No investment. Excellent Income! Children's Concern, Rt. 2, Box 818, Dunnellon, FL 32630.

MAKE BIG PROFIT$ HOME BUSINESS. "How To" free details: Fifth Ave. Publishers, 287 Lake, Suite 2, St. Catherines, Ontario, Canada L2R 5Z8.

NEW IMPORTS: Foreign manufacturers offering direct. Free information. International Intertrade Newsletter, Box 636-AA, Newark, NJ 07101.

MONEYMAKING OPPORTUNITIES—Cont'd

SELL BEAUTIFUL, HANDCRAFTED EARRINGS. 12 Sample Pairs $10. Satisfaction 100% Guaranteed! Flutterby's, Box 540W, Alexandria Bay, NY 13607.

MAKE HUGE HOME PROFITS!! $500 Weekly Possible!! Amazing Recorded Message Reveals Details. Call (516) 336-6112 Dept-101.

MONEY! From Product in Demand. Guaranteed Free Information. Box 384, Station A, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 8V4 Canada.

ALUMINUM Scrap—Recycle Yourself—Make up to $25.00/Pound! Free Information: Industrial—IO02, Box 127, Alexandria Bay, New York 13607.

BE YOUR OWN BOSS. Operate profitable janitorial business. Unlimited opportunities. *Free details.* National Information Services, P.O. Box 61401, Vancouver, Washington 98666.

$5,000 MONTHLY GUARANTEED with Part Time Business. Exciting details free with SASE. PC Group, 4807 Bethesda Avenue - Suite 116T, Bethesda, MD 20814.

TAKE CATALOG ORDERS. We drop-ship 2955 best-selling specialty products. Lowest below wholesale prices. Immediate delivery. Spectacular home business opportunity. FREE BOOK. SMC, 9401 De Soto Avenue, Dept. 155-14, Chatsworth, CA 91311-4991.

MAILORDER SUCCESS AWAITS YOU! Learn ALL the facts and secrets needed to start profitable home business. No experience or capital. Information FREE. Berkshire House, 29 Holmes Road, Pittsfield, MA 01201.

HOMEWORKERS WANTED!! Pleasant work-!. . .Top pay!. . .Free Supplies!. . .Details: "Successful Systems," Box 815-X, Flushing, NY 11362.

YOU'LL MAKE MONEY

SAVE MONEY TOO— BY READING and ANSWERING THESE CLASSIFIED ADS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MUSIC & MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

SPIRITUAL, religious poems wanted for musical setting, recording. $1,000.00 for best song. Chapel Recording (S8), Box 112, Wollaston, MA 02170. (A Talent Co.).

PERSONAL

SINGLE? Widowed? Divorced? Nationwide introductions! Refined, sincere people. 18-80. Identity. Box 315-DT, Royal Oak, Michigan 48068.

ORIENTAL ladies seeking correspondence, marriage. Presentations by American husband, Filipina wife. Asian Experience, Box 1214T, Novato, CA 94948.

BEAUTIFUL GIRLS SEEK FRIENDSHIP AND MARRIAGE. American—Mexican—Philippine—European. Photo selection FREE! Latins, Box 1716-DD, Chula Vista, CA 92012.

PRETTY Asian girls, Loyal, Affectionate, Educated, Seek correspondence, with American and Canadian men. International Connections, Box 5828, Bellingham, Washington 98227. (206) 734-5254 Anytime.

NATIONWIDE Singles Magazine. Send Name, Address, Age. Send No Money. Exchange, 1817 Welton #1580, Denver, Colorado 80202.

BEAUTIFUL ENGLISH SPEAKING Filipinas want men of all ages as Life Partners. Videos available: PAL, 58 Blanca, CO 81123-0884; 1-(900) 420-9444. $2.00/first minute. $1.00/additional. Adults.

PERSONAL—Cont'd

MEET USA Singles by direct phone/mail. M. Fischer Club, Box 2152-V, Loves Park, IL 61130.

SALESMEN-DISTRIBUTORS

AD SPECIALTY SALES OPENINGS. 81 Years in the Advertising Specialty and Calendar Industry have taught us the best Salespeople are Self-Starters who prefer the independence of straight commission sales over someone else calling the shots. NEWTON MFG. CO. offers that person the BEST Home Office Support in the industry! Ask around! Weekly Commissions, 24 Hour Toll-Free Message Center, a Generous Cash Bonus and the Top Sample Program in the Business. All orders Acknowledged. Shipping Notices provided and MUCH MORE! No Investment, No Collections. Full or Part-Time. You're your own Boss. Contact Richard Lowe, NEWTON MFG. CO., Dept. JIOC2, Newton, Iowa 50208. 515-792-4338.

SONGWRITERS

POEMS WANTED. Songs recorded and published. Radio-TV promotions. Broadway Music Productions, Box 7438-DA, Sarasota, FL 33578.

TAPES AND CASSETES

OLDTIME radio programs. Mysteries, adventure, suspense, science fiction, comedies. Classic tapes. Free catalogue. Carl D. Froelich, Heritage Farm, New Freedom, PA 17349.

For Greater Savings...Results...and Profits...

PLACE YOUR AD IN ONE OF OUR SPECIAL COMBINATIONS:
Combo #1, Combo #2, or Combo #3.

Each combination is designed to give your ad the largest audience available.

Each combination offers you a Special Discount Rate.
For further information write to I. M. Bozoki, Classified Ad Manager, Davis Publications, Inc., 380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ELLERY QUEEN

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING ORDER FORM

Send to **ELLERY QUEEN MAGAZINE**
Classified Advertising Department Suite 1401
380 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017

15 WORD MINIMUM
Only $48.00 for 15 Words or Less
$3.20 each additional word
Capitalized words add—40¢ per word
SAVE 15% WITH 3 CONSECUTIVE MONTHS SAME COPY ORDER

DEADLINE: Copy and payment must be in by the 5th day of the third preceding month for issue in which ad is to appear.

(PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE)

YOUR NAME _____

FIRM (NAME IN AD) _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ **STATE** _____ **ZIP** _____

PHONE: _____ **DATE:** _____

YOUR SIGNATURE _____

_____ Words at $3.20 each $

_____ Capitalized word at 40¢ each _____
Total amount for 1 ad $

15% Savings with 3 Consecutive Months Discount

(a) Multiply one ad total $_____ x 3 = $
(b) Multiply total amount on above line by x .85
(c) Total amount for 3 ads $

(Example One 15 word ad $48.00 x 3 months $144.00 x .85 = $122.40)

$_____ is enclosed for _____ insertion(s) in the _____ issue(s) _____ Heading

(FOR ADDITIONAL WORDS ATTACH SEPARATE SHEET)

(1) **$48.00**	(2) **$48.00**	(3) **$48.00**	(4) **$48.00**	(5) **$48.00**
(6) **$48.00**	(7) **$48.00**	(8) **$48.00**	(9) **$48.00**	(10) **$48.00**
(11) **$48.00**	(12) **$48.00**	(13) **$48.00**	(14) **$48.00**	(15) **$48.00**
(16) **$51.20**	(17) **$54.40**	(18) **$57.60**	(19) **$60.80**	(20) **$64.00**
(21) **$67.20**	(22) **$70.40**	(23) **$73.60**	(24) **$76.80**	(25) **$80.00**
(26) **$83.20**	(27) **$86.40**	(28) **$89.60**	(29) **$92.80**	(30) **$96.00**

HOW TO COUNT WORDS: Name and address must be included in counting the number of Words in your ad. Each initial or number counts as 1 word. Mark Holly, 380 Lexington Avenue, New York, New York 10017 7 WORDS. Zip codes are not counted. Phone # 2 Words. Symbols used as keys are charged for. City or State count as 1 word each. Garden City, New York 2 words. Abbreviations such as C.O.D. F.O.B. P.O. U.S.A. 7x10 35mm count as 1 word. (P.O. Box 145 count as 3 words) *Webster's International Unabridged Dictionary* will be used as our authority for spelling, compound words, hyphens, abbreviations, etc. **Please make checks payable to ELLERY QUEEN MAGAZINE.**

NEXT ISSUE...

13 *NEW* stories—including

CLARK HOWARD (about a return to the River Kwai)

ANDREW VACHSS (about a white alligator)

JAMES POWELL (about Mrs. Brodie's cow)

EDWARD D. HOCH (about Michael Vlado)

JUNE THOMSON (about a wrong number)

WILLIAM BANKIER (about dirty laundry)

JEFFRY SCOTT (about Jojo Lorraine)

PATRICIA MATTHEWS (about old habits)

JEREMIAH HEALY (about John Francis Cuddy)

ELEANOR SULLIVAN ..... *Editor*
RUSSELL ATWOOD ..... *Associate Editor*
TERRI CZECZKO ..... *Art Director*
RON KULINER ..... *Associate Art Director*
CAROLE DIXON ..... *Production Director*
DENNIS JONES ..... *Newsstand Operations Manager*
ELIZABETH BEATTY ..... *Subscription Manager*
BRIAN McKEON ..... *Circulation Planning Director*
CYNTHIA MANSON .... *Director of Marketing & Subsidiary Rights*
CHRIS DORBANDT ... *Newsstand Marketing & Promotions Manager*
FLORENCE EICHIN ..... *Contracts Manager*
VEENA RAGHAVAN ..... *Promotions Manager*
IRENE BOZOKI *Classified Advertising Manager*
A. BRUCE CHATTERTON *Advertising Director*
LISA FEERICK ..... *Advertising Services*

Advertising Sales Office

NEW YORK
212-557-9100

JOEL DAVIS
President and Publisher

JOE DeFALCO
Vice President, Treasurer

CARL BARTEE
Vice President, Manufacturing

ELLERY QUEEN
Editor-in-Chief
(1941–1982)

Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine. Vol. 95, No. 3, Whole No. 567, March 1990. Published every 28 days with two issues combined at year end by Davis Publications, Inc., at $2.25 a copy in the U.S.A., $2.75 in Canada. Basic subscription of 14 issues $27.97 in U.S.A. and possessions, $31.50 elsewhere, payable in advance and in U.S. funds. Allow 6 to 8 weeks for change of address. Editorial and Executive Offices, 380 Lexington Ave., N.Y., N.Y. 10017. Subscription orders and mail regarding subscriptions should be sent to Ellery Queen, P.O. Box 7052, Red Oak, Iowa 51591. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y. and at additional mailing offices. Canadian third-class postage paid at Windsor, Ontario.

© 1990 Davis Publications, Inc., all rights reserved. Protection secured under the Universal Copyright Convention and the Pan American Copyright Convention. ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE® is the registered trademark of Ellery Queen. Printed in U.S.A. Submission must be accompanied by self-addressed stamped envelope. The Publisher assumes no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts.

POSTMASTER: Send Change of Address to Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, P.O. Box 7052, Red Oak, IA 51591. In Canada return to 1801 South Cameron, Windsor, Ontario N9B 3E1. ISSN: 0013-6328. For back issues, send $3.50 to Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, P.O. Box 40, Vernon, NJ 07462.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MAIL ★ ORDER ★ MALL

▼ OUR EXCLUSIVE MAIL-ORDER INTRODUCTION

It's a toss-up as to whether it's kids or parents who are happiest with this very special Child's Chair. From the tyke's point of view, it's great because it pulls right up to a real table (fits under standard dining tables of 27¼" or higher). Children can feel part of family meals when not relegated to a highchair, plus a table is better than that little tray for food plus the requisite toys. Older toddlers are particularly pleased with what resembles a "grown up" chair. Adults love the quality — American-made of solid ¾" oak, double-lacquered for protection, plus the safety features — all edges rounded, all screws recessed, polypropylene straps attached with screws and washers. Designed for durability (nylon gliders instead of casters that fall off; no upholstery to replace), it's been extensively tested in restaurants, where there's more abuse than even *your* kids can dish out. Since there's nothing like a highchair for spoiling your decor the very best feature may be the handsome styling. 18"x20" at base. **$85.98** ($10.00) #A1792.

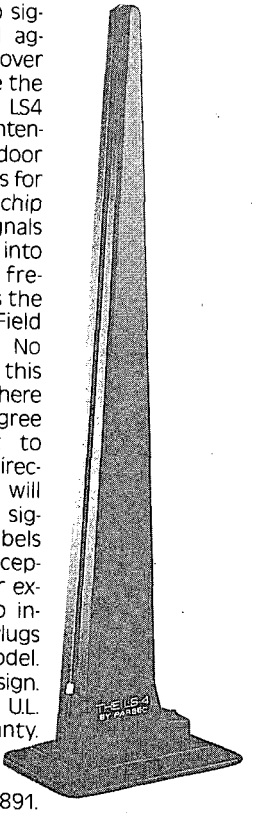
▼ YOUR FACE WILL THINK YOU'VE BEEN TO A LUXURY SPA

Some of the world's most famous professional salons rely on the deep-cleaning and rejuvenating effects of facial steaming. Accomplishing it at home has meant leaning over a stove under a towel tent — and who can be bothered? Now, there's the Episauna — just fill with tap water, plug in, flip up the hood to a comfortable angle and enjoy the warm, soothing mist. Tense facial muscles relax, nature's own perspiration system is stimulated to open and clean pores; built-up cosmetics and grime disappear. Use with your favorite cream and see its effects multiplied — dry, even over-sunned or chapped skin — can benefit. With hood flipped down, Episauna is just 3½" tall, for easy storing or packing. Even adjusts for foreign voltages automatically. U.L. listed, doubles as a vaporizer/inhaler for nasal congestion. **$39.98** ($4.00) #A1862.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE BEST RECEPTION EVER!!

liminate radio signal fade and agivating cross over nals that garble the und. The new LS4 ini-directional antenis the only indoor enna that thinks for elf. The micro chip ain receives signals d isolates them into lividual clear frencies. Features the lium Arsenide Field ect Transistor. No ed to redirect this enna. Leave it where s and its 360 degree dius allows it to eive from any direcn. This antenna will ost your radio sigs up to 24 decibels the clearest recepn you have ever exienced. Easy to inll, light weight. Plugs o any stereo model. que modern design. de in the U.S.A. U.L. ed. 1 year warranty. ensions: 3" 125" x 17.25". **8.98** ($5.25) #A1891.

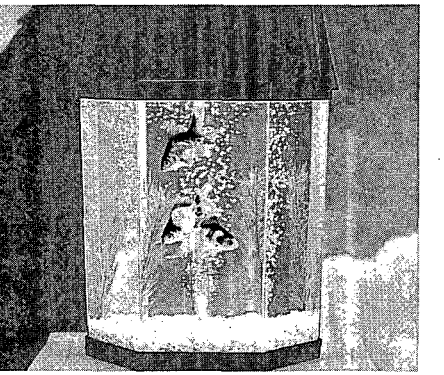


STINKY PINKYS

Just put a Stinky Pinky "sock" in each shoe and overnight odor is gone, absorbed by the special blend of all natural earth materials. Works in running oes, sneakers, boots, leather shoes, anyng that goes on your feet. And keeps on rking, too—just put Stinky Pinkys out in e sun for a day every three months or so restore their odor-catching ability. Three rs of Stinky Pinkys, enough for 6 shoes boots, costs **$19.98** ($4.00) #13263.

▼ THE AQUARIUM THAT FITS ANYWHERE!

Create a relaxing mood anywhere with this extra quiet Mini Hex™. It's smaller than most aquariums and hold a gallon of water so it fits where others won't. Use this Mini Hex™ in the office, kids room, anywhere. You'll love the calming affect and aquariums have been approved to relieve stress. Acrylic tank and hood with built-in lamp (4 to 7 watt bulb not incl.). Undergravel filtering systems keep your water cleaner and clearer longer. 110-120v air pump, complete set-up and maintenance instructions. Lifelike greenery and free fish food. Made in the USA. **$24.98** ($5.75) #A1934.



HOW TO ORDER

CALL TOLL FREE, 24 HOURS A DAY, 7 DAYS A WEEK

1-800-365-8493

CUSTOMER SERVICE CALL 201-367-2900

SATISFACTION GUARANTEED

30 Day Money Back Guarantee For Exchange or Refund

WE ACCEPT MASTERCARD / VISA

If ordering by mail send remittance to **MAIL ORDER MALL**, Dept. 030 EL ; P.O. Box 3006, Lakewood, N.J. 08701. Item price is followed by shipping and handling in ( ). Be sure to add both together to arrive at total price. N.J. residents add 6% sales tax. When using credit card — include account number, exp. date, signature. Sorry, no Canadian, foreign or C.O.D. orders.

Magalog Marketing Group Inc. © 1989

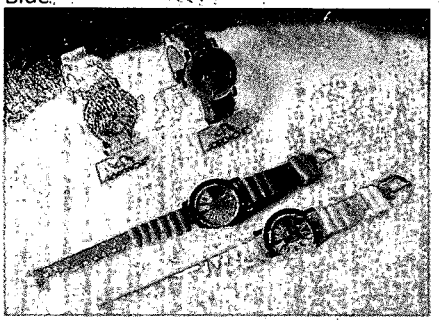
1905 Swarthmore Ave., Lakewood, N.J. 08701

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MAIL ☆ ORDER ☆ MALL

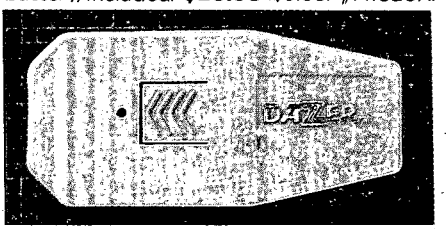
▽ FASHION STATEMENT WITH TIME

The Jordache Time® Marine Watch does more than tell time—it makes a fashion statement. Designed for active, on-the-go trend setters, it boasts a neon colored ribbed band and colorful analog dial with bold numbers. The Marine Sport Watch is water resistant to 100 feet. Comes with a 3 year silver oxide battery and has a 2 year limited warranty. Available in hot pink, rally green and bright blue (Not Shown), it looks great on gals and guys. It makes a super gift for someone special or for yourself. **$39.98** ($5.00) #A1942 Pink; #A1943 Green; #A1944 Blue.



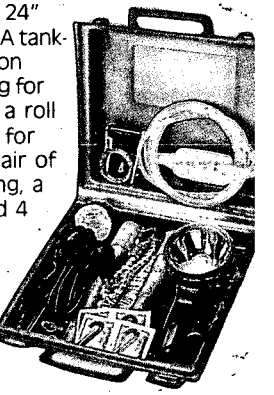
▽ HELPFUL TO HUMANS HARMLESS TO DOGS

Even the most dedicated canine affi-cionado can sometimes encounter unfriendly dogs. Dazer™ provides a humane way to repel their advance, emitting ultrasonic sound waves inaudible to humans and totally safe for dogs (unlike mace and other common deterrents). Pocket size (4¾" long) plastic case can also clip on belt; takes 1-9V battery, included. **$29.98** ($3.00) #A1829X.

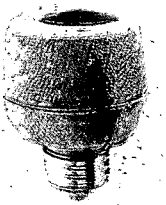


▽ FOR ROADSIDE PROBLEMS

A compact carrying case with snap loc comes complete with the most-wante emergency aids. First, an up-to-date batter charger that plugs into another car's ciga rette lighter. There's a powerful 12-V spo light with lighter plug and red reflecto plus two 15-minute safety flares (approve in 50 states) — a 24" sq. distress flag. A tank-to-tank gas siphon pump, a 6-qt. bag for carrying water, a roll of plastic tape for emergency repair of hoses and wiring, a coil of wire and 4 elastic trunk tie-downs complete the kit. **$21.98** ($4.00) #A1826X.



▽ TEACH AN OLD LAMP NEW TRICKS



Any lamp that take a standard bulb ca be updated. No rewirin needed-just screw int lamp socket. A touch c any metal part of lam becomes the "switch Touch once for low ligh twice for medium intensity, a third time fo full wattage. U.L. listed; one-year factor warranty. **$15.98** ($4.00) #A1700.

TO ORDER: Send check with item number fo total amounts, plus shipping & handling shown in ( ) payable to **MAIL ORDER MALL** Dept. **030 EL**, PO. Box 3006, Lakewood, N.J. 08701, or call TOLL FREE **1-800-365-8493**. NJ residents add 6% sales tax. We honor MasterCard/Visa. Sorry, no Canadian, foreign, C.O.D. orders. Satisfaction Guaranteed. 30 day money back guarantee for exchange or refund. Allow 30 days for delivery.

© 1989 Magalog Marketing Group Inc.
1905 Swarthmore, Ave. Lakewood, N.J. 08701

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED